

Anne Greive 1774

S E R M O N S

O N T H E

Attributes of God, and on moral obligations.

The eternity, immensity, immutability, unity, happiness, majesty, glory, and sovereignty of God. God, the creator, preserver, governor, and judge, of all; — incomprehensible.

The difference of good and evil, unchangeable, and easily discerned. A summary of moral obligations. Duties, relating to ourselves.

By the late Reverend and Learned

JEREMIAH HUNT, D.D.

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M DCC XLVIII.

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SEER-MONS

THE

Annals of the

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VOL. II. p. 14. l. 8. after [*God*] put a period. p. 33. l. 5. from the bottom; at the word [*The*] begin the double quotation. p. 38. l. 12. after [*them*] put a semicolon, p. 39. l. 7. r. [*I indulge*] p. 42. l. 14. d. [*de*] p. 56. l. 16. r. [*difformity*] p. 60. l. 6. from the bottom, close the parenthesis. p. 66. l. 17. r. [*pictures*] p. 70. l. 4. from the bottom; begin with (4.) p. 166. l. 8. d. [*that*] p. 172. l. 8, &c. d. [*if he took care of the world (even tho' he be supposed to have made it)*] p. 175. l. 3. from the bottom, r. [*καθ' ἡμέραν*] p. 209. the two last lines, and p. 210. l. 1, 2. d. [*or, if he has, that the whole plan is in his mind; and every turn, and every event, will be just according to that scheme*] p. 222. l. 17. after [*happy*] put a period. p. 227. l. 12. r. [*solid*] p. 246. l. at the bottom, r. [*cannot*] p. 247. l. 2. from the bottom, after [*perfections*] d. comma. p. 304. l. 21. r. [*the instances*] p. 342. l. 6. after [*quarter*] put a period. p. 346. l. 7. after [*be*] put a semicolon. p. 349. l. 6. after [*begin*] put a comma. p. 359. l. 6. after [*has*] put a comma. p. 360. l. 13. after [*And*] put a comma. p. 379. l. 15. after [*Being*] put a comma. p. 380. l. ult. after [*such*] put a comma.

А. Р. А. Р. А.



SERMON I.

The eternity of God.



R O M. xvi. 26.

*According to the Commandment
of the everlasting God.*



HAVING treated on the
attributes, which arise from
considering God as a *spirit*,
I now procede to the second
division of *the attributes* of
God: *viz.* those which arise from the
manner of his existing, *i. e.* by *absolute ne-*
cessity ; or, in other words, so as to imply
a contradiction not to exist.

SERM.
I.

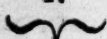
VOL. II.

B

By

SERM. By those Beings, which we converse

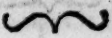
I.



with, we are led to own that there must be *a first Being*, which never had a beginning. This cannot, possibly, be denied by any. If there had been a point of duration, in which there existed no Being: no Being could ever have sprung up. For it must have arisen from nothing; which is absurd. Or else, it must be both cause and effect; at the same time: which is equally absurd.

When we have attained an idea of a Being, that never had a beginning; the mind will be led to inquire "What is the *ratio*, or ground, of the existence of this Being?" There must be, in every Being, some reason, or ground, for its existence; or else it cannot exist at all.

When I inquire into the cause, or ground, of the existence of him that is without a beginning; I do not mean *an efficient cause*. For that is absurd: in as much as there is included in the notion of God, his being without beginning; and consequently without any original, or cause,

cause, of existence; taking *the cause* in SERM.
this sense, as the author, or efficient, of I.
his existence. 

But there is no Being, that we can conceive of, but must have some ground, or *ratio*, for its existence. Now what is that *ratio*, or ground, of his existence; to whom we give the name of God? It is, *that he exists by absolute necessity*. And, by this term, *absolute necessity*, we mean what implies a contradiction not to exist; and is of the same nature with eternal truths. That the whole should be greater than any of its parts: or, that all the parts, taken together, should be equal to the whole, cannot be contradicted; or, to assert the contrary, would imply a contradiction. So it is with regard to the existence of him that is *eternal*. We cannot conceive that it is possible that he should not exist. And therefore he must exist in the perfectest, most absolute, and independent manner. From this *ratio* of the existence of the first cause, there will arise the following attributes.

SERM. 1. That he is *eternal*. 2. That he is

I. *immense*; or not to be circumscribed by place, or space. 3. That he is *immutable*. 4. That he is *only one*. For, if this Being, which we call God, exists in all points of duration and space; or is *eternal* and *immense*, he must be conceived by us to be *infinite*; and that he is *but one*: --- These are the *attributes*, which arise from the manner of our conceiving of God, to exist by *absolute necessity*.

It is upon the first of these attributes, that we design, now, to discourse. And I have fixed upon the words read, as giving a just foundation for such a discourse: — *According to the commandment of the everlasting God.*

In treating on this subject, I shall,

I. Explain, in what senses the words, *eternal* and *everlasting*, are used in the sacred writings: and particularly, in what sense we are to understand them, when applied to God.

II. Prove that God is *eternal*, in the highest and most perfect sense of the word.

III. Con-

III. Conclude, by making practical reflections. SERM. I.

I. I shall set before you the different meanings, in which the words, *eternal* and *everlasting*, are made use of, in the sacred writings; and particularly how we are to understand them, when applied to God.

They are used to signify only a long duration. And, in this way, the word is to be interpreted, *Gen. xvii. 8.* where God promises to *Abraham*, that he should possess the land of *Canaan*, and that it should be *an everlasting inheritance*, or *possession*; that is, that he and his descendents, in many succeeding ages, should enjoy and possess that land. *Numb. x. 8.* “And the sons of *Aaron*; the priests, shall blow with trumpets, and they shall be to you for an ordinance *for-ever*, throughout your generations.” *For-ever*; that is, as long as the constitution of *Moses* should last. *Gen. xlix. 26.* We read of *the everlasting hills*; which are so called, because of their permanency; or that they shall indure, as long as this frame of the world

SERM. lasts. *Habak.* iii. 6. For the same reason,

I.  the prophet speaks of *the everlasting mountains*, 1 *Sam.* iii. 13. "I have told him
" [*Eli*] that I will judge his house for-
" ever;" that is, for many successive ge-
nerations. The Jewish servant, that would
continue with his master, had his ear bor-
ed; and was to serve his master *for-ever*.
The meaning is, He shall not go free at the
end of the usual term of seven years; but
shall serve his master till his death; or till
the year of jubilee.

2. These words express a duration,
which continues as long as the subject, to
which it is applied: and then putting it
into a state, out of which it will never be
restored.

Numb. xxiv. 20. "And, when he look-
" ed on *Amalek*, he took up his parable,
" and said; *Amalek* was the first of the na-
" tions; but his latter end shall be that he
" perish *for-ever*:" that is, he shall be
destroyed, and shall never rise to any con-
siderable power, or government, any more.
And thus it is explained, *Deut.* xiii. 16.
"And thou shalt gather all the spoil of it,
" into the midst of the streets thereof; and
" shalt

" shalt burn, with fire, the city, and all SERM.

" the spoil thereof, every whit; *for the* I.

" *Lord thy God*: and it shall be an heap

" *for-ever.*" The meaning of this phrase *for-ever*, is explained by the following

words, *It shall never be built again.* And,

in this sense, we have it, *Jude*, ver. 7. "E-

" ven as *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, and the ci-

" ties about them, in like manner, giving

" themselves over to fornication, and go-

" ing after strange flesh, are set forth for

" an example, suffering the vengeance of

" *eternal fire.*" By *eternal fire*, here, we

cannot possibly understand the fire, into

which the wicked shall be thrown, at last;

because, here, they are set forth, as *an ex-*

ample: which is not consistent with the

other interpretation. The meaning there-

fore, is, that *Sodom* and *Gomorrhah*, on the

account of their crying sins, were destroy-

ed; and were never to be rebuilt. And,

therefore, it is expressed in this manner,—

" suffering the vengeance of *eternal fire.*"

3. We find these terms, *eternal* and

for-ever, used in an higher sense; with re-

gard to *angels* and *men*: viz. that they

shall be *everlasting*; that is, tho' they

SERM. were not without beginning ; yet they shall

I. be without end.

4. *Lastly*, The terms, *everlasting* and *eternal*, are used to signify what never had a beginning, nor will ever have an end. And, in this sense, they are to be ascribed to God. For he is absolute and independent, *from everlasting to everlasting* God.

II. I am to prove that this *attribute* does belong to God.

And I shall do this, 1. By *reason*. 2. By *revelation*.

1. By *reason*--- And this attribute, if we will use our *reason* carefully, will be apprehended to arise necessarily, from the manner of God's existence. If he exists by *absolute necessity*, he must exist in all points of duration. For, supposing that he existed in one point of duration, and not in another ; he might not exist in any ; and therefore he would cease to be a *Being* without beginning, and without end. But this being very abstract, I shall rather go to a reason that lies more clear, and more obvious to every one's understanding.

Without

Without all doubt, *to be*, is more excellent than *not to exist*. To continue in being, is a greater excellency than to be for a moment, and then to be taken out of existence. And, as GOD is a *Being* all-perfect, he must be conceived, therefore, to possess all duration: or, in other words, to be *eternal*. And we find that this is an attribute, which the *philosophers* continually ascribed to their *deities*. They called them *eternal* and *immortal*. Whereby it is evident, that they had such a notion of the first and supreme *Being*: how inconsistent soever their theology might be to this sentiment, which they professed to entertain; and which their reason led them to acknowledge.

2. We procede to prove this, by passages from the sacred writings.

Rev. i. 8. *Which is, and which was, and which is to come, the almighty.* Deut. xxxiii. 27. *The eternal GOD.* Is. lvii. 15. He is represented as *the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity.* 1 Tim. i. 17. *The king eternal, immortal.* 1 Tim. vi. 16. He is represented as *only having immortality: that is,* He alone possesses all duration; infinite duration; as he never had
a be-

SERM. a beginning, nor will ever have an end,

I. He is independent, and perfectly *eternal*,
 and *immortal*. We are made with minds, capable of existing without end; but then we had a beginning; and so we cannot, in that sublime sense, be said to *have immortality*, as the first cause; as he who never had a beginning; but existed from *everlasting and to everlasting*. And this is represented, *Pf. cii. 24, &c.* where the years of God are said to be *throughout all generations*; and he is described as changing the heavens and the earth, and folding them up, like a vestment; but, in a very elegant strain, the Psalmist represents God himself to be *immutable and eternal*: *Thou art the same; and thy years shall have no end.*

This, then, appears clearly to be an attribute, or perfection, which the sacred writings ascribe to God.

III. I now procede to make some practical remarks.

1. From this attribute of *eternity*, we may see; how justly the sacred writings throw a contempt upon the idols, and
 false

false Gods, which the nations around the SERM.
Jews worshiped.

Idols are represented as *lying vanities*; and very justly: For they are *Gods* but of yesterday, and they perish to morrow; Beings, which had no real existence, or they had no dominion, or authority; neither could they have influence; as their vain and weak votaries expected. *The true God* describes himself thus, *Is. xliii. 10. I am he: before me there was no God; neither shall there be any after me.*

When we conceive of *God* as *eternal*; we must apprehend that he is the cause and original of all other Beings, visible and invisible. And, then, how weak is it for any of his creatures to worship the sun, moon, or stars: and not offer to the supreme cause, those tributes of praise, which belong to him, who is *from everlasting to everlasting*? Certainly, nothing has discovered more the weakness of men, than their being addicted to bow down to the work of their own hands; the beginning of whose existence they are apprized of: and which, in a little time, by the changes that

SERM. that attend all Beings, here below, shall

I. have a period put to them

2. If God *is eternal*, (as undoubtedly he is) then we may see how unreasonable it is, for any person, to fall into doubts, whether God will perform his promises and threatnings: though the execution is at present, for wise reasons, delayed.

You see an instance of this folly; in the scoffers, of whom the apostle *Peter* speaks, 2 *Pet.* iii. 3, &c. “ In the last days there
“ will come scoffers, saying, what does
“ there now appear; which shews that he
“ will perform his promise? Our Fathers
“ are, indeed, fallen asleep; but all other
“ things seem to go on, in one even course.
“ And there is not any the least mark of
“ the accomplishment of those promises,
“ or threatnings, which he has, by the
“ apostles, represented.”— Now, St. *Pe-*
ter gives a very full answer to this, *A*
thousand years are but as one day to God;
and one day as a thousand years. Where
there is infinite duration, a thousand years
are but as a point. And, indeed, there
cannot be conceived any *aliquot* parts of
what is infinite. Tho’, therefore, he may
appear

appear to us to forget his promise; yet we SERM.
 are certain, as he is *an eternal Being*, that I.
 all those delays of performance stand for
 nothing; any more than as they are ex-
 pressive of the divine wisdom, in exercising
 patience and forbearance towards men; and
 thereby shewing his willingness; that all
 should come to the knowlege of his truth,
 and be saved.

When we take a partial view of the
 course of providence, we are ready to ap-
 prehend that God disregards and overlooks
 his faithful servants. They struggle with
 great difficulties; they are ready to be o-
 verwhelmed with sorrow. But remember,
God is eternal: and there is no variation
 in him. He knows when is the fittest time,
 to appear; to redress what is contrary to
 his moral character.

3. Since *God is eternal*, that is, without
 begining and without end; it appears
 very clear, that he may be trusted; and
 that he is the object of our supreme confi-
 dence.

We know, indeed, when an opportu-
 nity is past, of executing any design; there
 may arise, in men, an incapacity, in future
 time,

SERM. time, for their performing what they had

I.  promised, and intended to do. Accidents may turn out. Man is possessed only of the present moment. And, if that be disregarded, there may arise many incidents, that may render him incapable of performing, what he has given ground to expect. But this cannot be applied to God. He exists without beginning and without end. And, therefore, if he does not assist now, or perform that which we expect, at his beneficent hand; he may hereafter. And he is infinitely wise, and he will do it, at the best season, and in the properest way. This shews that we should ever make him the object of our trust and hope. Good men may, at all times, put their trust in him: since his protection may be relied on for-ever, *Psf. xc. 1. Lord, thou hast been our refuge from one generation to another. Before the mountains were brought forth; or ever the earth or the world were made; from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God, Is. xxvi. 4. Trust ye in the Lord for-ever. For in the Lord Jehovah is everlasting strength. Deut. xxxiii. 27. The eternal God is thy refuge: and underneath are*

are the everlasting arms. *Is. li. 7, 8.* Fear ye not the reproach of men. The moth shall eat them up, like a garment; but my righteousness shall be for-ever; and my salvation from generation to generation. SERM. I.

4. If GOD is eternal, then the wicked have the highest reason to fear him.—— They can never escape him; who not only is almighty, but who will exist for-ever. And, therefore, the sacred writers tell us, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living GOD. That great Being lives for-ever; and can easily make those, that offend him, as unhappy as they have rendered themselves guilty. Let us, therefore, attend to our Savior's direction, *Matt. x. 28.* Fear not them which kill the body; but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him, who is able to destroy both body and soul in hell.

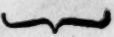
5. This argument is a ground for frail and mortal man to hope for pity and compassion from GOD. *Is. lvii. 15, 16.* Thus saith the high and lofty one, that inhabiteth eternity, "I will not contend for-ever.— For the spirit would fail before me." *Pf. cii. 24.* I said, O my GOD, take me not away in

SERM. *in the midst of my days. Thy years are*

I. *throughout all generations. Ps. ciii. 15,*

~ ~ ~ *&c. As for man; his days are as grass;*
— but the mercy of the Lord is from
everlasting to everlasting.

6. Lastly, Since God is *eternal*, this may confirm our hope, that, if we fear and faithfully obey him, we shall be rewarded with *eternal* happiness; an interminable state of glory.— We expect a reward from him, who never had a beginning; nor ever will have an end: from him, who both can and will make those, that are his children, here; his sons, by a resurrection to the possession of an incorruptible inheritance. We may reasonably express our hope in that reward, which he has set before us. We may expect *eternal* Life, and *endless* glory: because he, that has promised, is *from everlasting to everlasting*. *Because he lives, we shall live also.* He will raise us to the resurrection of life: to a life, that shall never be interrupted, nor have a period put to it. This should animate and encourage us to pursue higher and greater measures of strict piety and
 real

real holiness; that so, at last, we may SERM.
 be received into the possession of that e- I.
 ternal weight of glory; which GOD, 
who alone has immortality, in the fullest
 and most absolute sense, has graciously
 promised to those that love him.



and believe that to, at last, we may learn
the glorious and the position of him
which God, which God,
and of a future time, that graciously
promised to those that love him.



Vol. II. Part II. C. and in the
the following manner.



S E R M O N II.

The immensity of God.



I KINGS viii. 27.

But will GOD indeed dwell on the earth? behold the heaven, and heaven of heavens, cannot contain thee: how much less this house which I have builded?



S GOD exists by absolute necessity, he must be eternal and immense. We have treated of the former, in the last discourse. And the words of the text will lead us to treat of the latter. Which we propose to do, in the following method.

SERM.
II.

SERM.

II.

I. To explain, in a few words, what we are to understand by the *immensity* of God.

II. To prove, by *reason* and *scripture*, that this is an attribute which belongs to God.

III. Answer some objections, which are raised against it.

IV. Make practical reflections.

I. I am, in a few words, to explain what we are to understand by the *immensity* of God.

The obvious meaning of the words, is, that he exists every where; and that he is contained, or limited, no where: that he exists in all points of place, or space: and fills the expansion of the universe. This is the idea, which we are to form; when we say, *God is unbounded*.

As he exists without beginning and without end; and takes in unbounded duration: so he does exist in infinite extension. There cannot be any supposition of God's being confined, or circumscribed. And, though we have an idea of infinite space,
yet

yet we cannot conceive the manner, in SERM.
 which this immense Being fills it, or is II.
 extended through it. However; the man-
 ner, in which we are to conceive this, is
 not of any great importance: neither is it
 to be wondered at, that we have not a
 more distinct idea of it; as our minds are
 finite; and it is impossible for us to take in,
 or comprehend, any idea, which implies
 in it infinity. We may know that such
an attribute belongs to GOD; tho' we can-
 not (as we are Beings limited) understand
 the manner, in which we are to conceive
 of such *an attribute*.

What the *schools* have said, upon this
 head, has been absurd, and incapable of
 being understood by any.

II. I am to prove that this *attribute* does
 belong to GOD. And I shall endeavor to
 prove it,

1. By *reason*.—— We find that all Be-
 ings, which we converse with, are limited
 to determinate places and spheres of acting.
 But, as we must apprehend GOD to be free
 from all imperfection; and to have every
 excellence, in the highest degree, attribut-

SERM. ed to him: it would be unworthy of a
 II. Being of all-perfection, to be under restraint, or limited. This would be an abatement of that *power*, which we must ascribe to God. For, if he does not fill heaven and earth, and is uncircumscribed, we cannot but conceive that he is limited. And, if so, then his *power* must be bounded too. For a *power* to act, where a Being does not exist, carries in it a great absurdity.

We have an apprehension, and very justly, that God *is the first cause*; and that he made the heavens and the earth: and that his works are of very great extent. Now, wherever he creates, or gives Being, he must be conceived to exist: he must be present, wherever he exerts his *power* of creating, or does exercise his government.

To suppose that God governs intirely by other Beings, is to suppose that he governs without any certainty. Whereas he is supposed to govern all things in unerring wisdom; and in a manner, consistent to that Being that is possessed of every perfection, in the highest degree.

But,

But, I think, there is one argument SERM.
 from reason, which is (at least to me) de- II.
 monstrable. And *that is*, "That God
 "exists in such a manner, as that it im-
 "plies a contradiction that he should not
 "exist. And, therefore, he exists in every
 "point of duration, and space." If he
 exists in this place, or space, and not in
 another; it does not appear that he exists
by absolute necessity. For to exist by *abso-*
lute necessity does imply, that he must ex-
 ist *every where*. So that, though what I
 have before offered, proves that, if this
 was removed from God, there would be
 a limitation of his Being; which is not
 consistent with an all-perfect mind: and
 that he must, as he is the creator, be pre-
 sent where-ever he gives Being to any; or
 exercises any government:— Though
 these, I say, are no inconsiderable proofs:
 yet this I take to be the highest and strong-
 est proof, that, as God exists by absolute
 necessity, he must exist in infinite space;
 and can admit of no limits or no bounds:
 he must be *every where* the same; and
 even beyond what the highest imagination
 can represent. Whatever can be absent

SERM. from one place, may be absent from another: and consequently can have no necessity of existence at all.

II.

Thus it appears that this is a perfection, which reason does confirm, and teach us to attribute to the first, all-perfect mind. And the wisest of the *heathens* were so convinced, by the strength of the arguments, whereby this is supported, that some both of *Greece* and *Rome*, owned that *Deity* pervaded all Beings; and that he is extended through all possible space. This is the opinion of *Plato*; and it is asserted by *Tully*, [*De Leg.* lib. II.] who says, *Homines existimare oportere, Deos omnia cernere, deorum omnia esse plena.* *Seneca* (Ep. 95.) *Ubique & omnibus praesto.*

2. Let us prove the immensity of God, by plain texts of scripture.

Job xxiii. 8, &c. Behold I go forward, but he is not there, and backward, but I cannot perceive him. On the left-hand, where he does work, but I cannot behold him; he hideth himself on the right-hand, that I cannot see him; but he knoweth the way that I take: when he hath tried me, I shall

I shall come forth as gold. Ps. cxxxix. 7, &c. there is the most strong and beautiful expression of the omnipresence of God, that occurs in the sacred writings. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or, whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right-hand shall hold me. If I say, "Surely the darkness shall cover me;" even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. Is. lxvi. 1, 2. Thus saith the Lord, "The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?" Jer. xxiii. 23, 24. Am I a God at hand, saith the Lord, and not a God afar off? Can any hide himself in secret places, that I cannot see him, saith the Lord? Do not I fill heaven and earth, saith the Lord? Amos ix. 2, 3. Though they dig into hell, thence shall my hand take them:

SERM. *them : though they climb up to heaven, thence*

II. *will I bring them down. And, though they
hide themselves in the top of Carmel, I will
search and take them thence. Though they
be hid from my sight, in the bottom of the
sea ; thence will I command the serpent, and
he shall bite them.*

To these passages more might be added ;
but I shall only take notice of *Acts xvii.*
*28. For in him we live, and move, and
have our Being.*

The doctors among the *Jews*, describing God, take notice, that *he is the place
of all. All things exist in him. He is
intimate and present to all Beings, to all
places, or to boundless space.*

III. I procede to answer some objections, that are raised against this *attribute
of God.*

I. Some may object, and say, “ If
“ God is every where present, he must
“ be present to all natural and moral im-
“ purities. And would not this be a de-
“ scription unbecoming him, who is all-
“ perfect ?”

Answer.

Answer. This objection has no weight SERM.
 at all in it. It arises from forming wrong II.
 notions of God. The first Being is im-
 material, and a perfectly conscious and
 active Being; who made all things, and
 he is intimately acquainted with the very
 essences of things, which he has formed.
 What uneasy impressions are made upon
 us, undoubtedly, spring from our having
 organized bodies; but the primary quali-
 ties of things, from whence these secondary
 take their original, do not imply natural
 impurity. These spring from secondary
 qualities of bodies, and are admirably suit-
 ed to us, while we wear organized bo-
 dies: but we cannot apprehend that this
 can any way affect that mind, or spirit,
 which is all-perfect; and who knows the
 essences of all things; and has no organ-
 ized body, to be affected by any Being
 whatever. God acts always, upon all
 things, every where; and is himself acted
 upon, by nothing. We, indeed, have bo-
 dily organs; whereby we are affected in
 such a manner, as is inconsistent to appre-
 hend of God, who is a pure spirit.

As

SERM. As to moral impurity: it is evident,

II. that *the holiness of God* is not in the least diminished, by beholding all the wickedness, which is committed in the world. He disapproves of it; and will, no doubt, distinguish those that are his sincere votaries, from others, who have offended him. But his perfection, or happiness, is, by no means, in any degree, impaired by the ill conduct of any of his rational creatures.

2. Another objection, raised against this character of God's *being every where*, is, "Do not the scriptures tell us, that he
 " is in the heavens? or, that his throne is
 " there? Are we not taught, in the Old
 " Testament, that, when there appeared
 " a glory unto *Moses*; he was ordered to
 " put off his shoes: for that place was
 " holy, because God was there? Was not
 " God said to dwell with *Israel*, and to
 " be the habitation of his people? Does
 " not the Old Testament assure us, that
 " God was present in the *Holy of Holies*?
 " and between the cherubim? And with
 " him, also, who is of an humble and con-
 " trite spirit? Now, how is it possible,
 " when

"when these are the representations of the SERM.
 "sacred writings; that we should admit II.
 "that he is *immense*; limited or circum-
 "scribed no where: but that he does ex-
 "ist in every point of place, or space?"

I think, there may be very clear answers made to these objections. For these expressions are not used to signify any confinement of his real and proper presence. God is said to be *in heaven*; or that his throne is in heaven; to express his height, not in place, but in power. *Is. xiv. 13, 14. Thou hast said in thine heart, "I will ascend into heaven. I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most high."* And the destruction of the *Babylonish monarchy* is described after the like manner, ver. 12. *How art thou fallen from heaven?*

Besides; God may be said to be *in heaven*, because, in that place, he may make an extraordinary manifestation of his glory: in respect of which it is called *his seat*, and *throne*, and *the habitation of his glory*. So, in heaven, the angels, that attend him, are said to be in his presence. They see his

SERM. his face, or behold the manifestation of
 II. the divine glory and majesty. Not that
 God is visible, any where. That is an
 idea which we cannot entertain of him:
 but he may have some symbol of his pre-
 sence; and there may be such majesty in
 one place of his creation, as may lay a
 foundation of saying, "that he is emi-
 nently present there." But that does
 not imply that he is to be excluded from
 any point of place, or space. So, when
 he dwelt in the holy of holies, in the ta-
 bernacle, or in the temple; it did not im-
 ply that he was not every where; but that
 he did peculiarly take the people of *Israel*
 under his guidance and conduct; reside
 among them in a glorious manner; and,
 from the holy of holies, express his or-
 ders, and communicate instances of pecu-
 liar favor and goodness.

When God is said to dwell in the hearts
 of those that are humble and contrite; the
 meaning is, that he is there, with his fa-
 vor; or to impart proper blessings to them.
 — You see, then, that there must be a
 difference made, between the presence of
 God, by way of remarkable and distin-
 guished

guished manifestation of his glory; and the attribute, of his being *immense*, with regard to his essence. SERM. II.

IV. I now come to conclude this discourse by making practical reflections.

I. From this subject we may easily see the reasonableness of acknowledging the *providence of God*.

Some philosophers, almost in every age, have thought, with regard to greater and important affairs, that God is at the helm, and directs, and over-rules: but, with respect to small things, it is what they could not apprehend to be agreeable to those high and sublime sentiments, that we ought to form of God.

The Epicureans carried this so far, that they made their Gods quite serene, and regardless of all the concerns and affairs of this present world. They thought it was a disturbance of that serenity of mind, in which they placed felicity, to concern themselves with the affairs of men. Now all these sentiments are formed, in consequence of not attending to the idea, that we must conceive of God, viz. that he is immense, or every where, without any limits.

SERM. mits or bounds; and that he is all-power-

II.

ful and all-wise. And pray how is it possible, from this idea, to imagine that he does neglect to take notice of the smallest and most inconsiderable affairs of every particular creature? It is hard to conceive how God can overlook any thing; when he is present every where, and his understanding is infinite. So that their notion is so weak, that it appears to me to be quite incompatible with an apprehending the first mind to be *immense*, unbounded, and not capable of being circumscribed. For, if he is infinite in this sense, and omniscient, and almighty; that will undoubtedly lead us to conceive that he can do all things, direct and govern all: and with much greater facility than the highest power on earth can engage in any work whatever. What reason, therefore, have any to imagine that he does not take care of the concerns of every particular person, and all their affairs? His providence extends not only to great events, but even to the minutest circumstances of every the smallest action and event in the world. Without him, not a sparrow falls to the ground; and by him, the very hairs of

of our head are all numbered. It cannot SERM.
but be evident, from God's *immensity*, II.
that all things are alike easie to be inspected
and governed by him, as are any; and the
minutest, as much as the greatest. Nay,
in the nature of things, it is impossible,
that he, who is every where alike present,
should not observe and attend to every thing
alike.

2. By this character of *omnipresence*, the
true God of the universe is distinguished
from all false *deities*, and the vanity of ido-
latry made plainly to appear.

We may see, from this *attribute* of
God, the absurdity of the ancient opinion
of *topical gods*: or, that to every place
there was a particular deity. *2 Kings xviii.*
34. Where are the Gods of Hamath and of
Arpad? Where are the Gods of Sephar-
vaim, and Henah, and Ivah? 1 Kings
xx. 28. Because the Syrians have said, The
Lord is God of the hills; but he is not
God of the valleys;" therefore will I deliver
this great multitude into thine hand, and
ye shall know that I am the Lord.

SERM.

II.

The notion of *topical Gods* did, in a great measure, prevail also among the polite *Greeks* and *Romans*. They had their *Lares* and their *Penates*. And they thought that they were tutelars and guardians of all their domestic affairs. But *Revelation* gives us more just and exalted ideas of *God*. The antient heathens multiplied *deities*; as if *one God* was not sufficient. Whereas it is evident, if we will form right sentiments, that there is *but one God*, who is without beginning or end; and who is every where present, not bounded by place or space.

From the same consideration, appears the vanity of making an image of *the true God*. For by what likeness can immensity be represented? One would really be astonished that men, indued with reason, should ever abandon and forsake the exercise of this higher power, so far as to paint *the Father*, as an aged man: *His son*, as a tall young man: and the *Holy Ghost*, as a dove.— But how foolish is it to think that he, whose offspring, we, as rational creatures, are, should *be like unto* any picture,

ture, or statue? unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art, or man's device? SERM. II.

Acts xvii. 28, 29.

The folly of *Balak* from hence is evident, when he said to *Balaam*, Numb. xxiii. 27. *Come, I pray thee; I will bring thee to another place: peradventure it will please GOD, that thou mayest curse me them from thence.*

From the same reason appears the vanity of *saint-worship*. As if GOD, who, being omnipresent, hears all prayers himself; should either need, or regard, the intercession of others, whom he hath not expressly appointed to that high office.

All these are the result of not forming just and right sentiments of GOD; as a Being, that exists by *absolute necessity*; and, of consequence, exists in every point of duration and space.

3. From hence we may see, what reason sinners have to dread violating the laws, that are given them, by that Being, who is every where present, and all-knowing?

What! sinner, canst thou flatter thyself with a vain expectation, that thou canst escape the almighty, or avoid his all-powerful

SERM. erful arm ; who is present every where ?

II. View, and read with attention, what *the Psalmist* says, *Whither shall I go from thy presence ? Darkness and light are the same unto Deity.* There is no retirement that can remove you out of his observing eye. And therefore, how terrible is it, with presumption, resolutely to go contrary to his laws : when he can make you as unhappy, as you have rendered yourselves guilty ? There is no possibility that you can escape from him, who is every where present : and therefore it is extremely vain to imagine, that you may offend him, and escape the effects of his displeasure.

His eye runs to and fro, through the whole earth : and to him all things are naked, and open, and bare. For he is present every where.

Nothing can be more vain and groundless than to imagine that we can conceal from him, who is every where present, any principle of conduct, any the most retired action, or any criminal thought whatever. This shews the vanity of hypocrites. And yet there is a good deal of hypocrisy arising

arising from a secret inattention to this di- SERM.
vine perfection. II.

How many do we see, who would be ashamed to act that before a wise man, which they have the assurance to act, tho' the eye of him, who is infinitely wise, is full upon them? It is astonishing to think that we can secrete our conduct, or even our designs, from him, who exists in every point of place, or space. All disguise will avail nothing with him, who is every where present. All our masques can never screen us from the knowlege of him, who is the searcher of the hearts and reins. All things are naked before his piercing eye; and he sees, with the greatest exactness, and observes all the circumstances, by which a crime may be aggravated. For he is present to us in our greatest recesses, and in our most secret retirement.

4. It follows, from *the omnipresence of God*, that he is every-where to be relied on, by good men; as well as to be feared by the bad.

Pf. cxlvi. 1, 2. God is our refuge and trust; a very present help in trouble. Therefore will we not fear; though the earth be

SERM. removed: *and, though the mountains be*

II. *carried into the midst of the sea.*

Good men cannot fall into any distress but God can relieve them. For he is every where present. And, though he may not grant some particular favor, (which they may wish for, but which he sees improper for them) yet, as he is, every where present, he can sustain them by his right hand. And, as he is, in a very particular manner, present to those that fear him, to support and comfort them. Pious men have just reason to form pleasing hopes, that he, who is so near and intimate to them, will have a kind respect to them; and communicate every instance of favor, that he, in infinite wisdom, sees proper and good for them. Nothing could furnish so strong an argument to influence to a trust and confidence in God, as to apprehend that our Father is continually present with us. He can see us under any darkness and affliction; and he can lift up the light of his countenance in such a manner as to give us higher satisfaction than all the world can afford. And, if we be-
have

have piously and virtuously, in secret (as SERM. well as in public) he, who seeth in secret, will, at last, reward us openly. II.

To conclude. Let us represent God to ourselves often, as a Being, that is every where present. "God is now present
" with me. What ! shall indulge designs
" that are criminal ? Shall not I take care
" to avoid what will offend him ? Shall I
" affront my heavenly Father to his face ?
" When I am satisfied he is present, and
" knows all that is in me; knows all my
" most secret actions; and even knows
" my thoughts afar off ?"

There would be a very great advantage, arising from living with a lively sense upon our minds, of God's *being* continually *present* with us. By this mean we should be upon our guard: we should ever walk with humility, and with a dread of offending our heavenly Father: And we should ever have an unshaken trust in, and dependence upon him. Nothing then would move us. All the storms and tempests, that could possibly arise in this world, would not take us off from him.

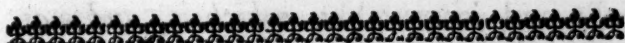
SERM. By this, we should be under the direction
 II. and influence of his precepts; and be ever
 careful to attain his favor here; that we
 may, at last, receive, from his kind and
 bountiful hand, a reward of perfect and
 interminable happiness and glory.





S E R M O N I I I .

The immutability of God.



MALACHI iii. 6.

• *I am the Lord, I change not.*



N treating upon the immu- SERM.
tability (or unchangeable- III.
ness) of God, I shall

I. Endeavor to explain
it.

II. Prove that it is to be ascribed unto
God.

III. Answer an objection, that is raised
against it.

IV. Make proper application.

I. I shall

SERM.

III.

I. I shall endeavor to explain *this attribute* of God.

To set this in a clear light, it will be requisite to represent, in what respects God is to be conceived, as *immutable*.

1. In respect of *his essence*, God is absolutely *unchangeable*, invariably the same; the great I AM; he, whose Being is essentially and immutably, *which is, and was, and is to come*.

2. God is *unchangeable*, in respect of *his perfections*.

Concerning those perfections, which flow necessarily from his essence, and depend not upon his will, this is self-evident: because whatever flows from any cause, or principle, must likewise, of necessity be as invariable as the cause or principle, from which it necessarily proceeds. Of this kind are *the natural perfections* of God.

With regard to *moral perfections*, God is, likewise, *immutable*. He is *unchangeably true, faithful, righteous, and good*.

3. God

3. God is *unchangeable* in the particular SERM. decrees and purposes of his will: in his III. laws: in his promises, which are absolute: and in those, which are conditional, if the condition is complied withal. And finally, *God is unchangeable in his threatnings.*

II. I procede to prove that *immutability*, in all these respects, is to be ascribed to God.

With regard to *his essence*, God must be *unchangeable*: because his Being is necessary, and his essence self-existent. For whatever necessarily is, as it cannot but be, so it cannot but continue to be, invariably, what it is. That, which depends upon nothing, can be affected by nothing; can be changed by nothing; can be impaired by nothing; can be varied by no time, or accident. This is emphatically expressed by the name, which is given to God. *Exod. iii. 14. Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM bath sent me unto you. Rev. i. 4. Grace be unto you, from him, which is, and which was, and which is to come.* In a more popular way, God is stiled, *The king immortal.* 1 Tim. i. 17.

Who

SERM. *Who only hath immortality, 1 Tim. vi. 16.*

III. *that is, immutably and independently.*

Rom. i. 33. The incorruptible GOD. Ps.

xc. 2. From everlasting to everlasting.

Pf. cii. 26, 27. They all shall perish; yea,

all of them shall wax old like a garment: as

a vesture, shalt thou change them, and they

shall be changed. But thou art the same,

and thy years shall have no end.

That GOD is *immutable*, in regard to his *natural perfections*, we have already proved; since they necessarily flow from his *essence*; which is, and must be *unchangeable*.

His *moral perfections* are alike *immutable*. GOD always perfectly knows what is fit and right; can never, possibly, be deceived, or awed, or tempted, or imposed upon. He, therefore, invariably will do what is best, and most fit, and right. With great reason, therefore, the *Scripture* saith, *Pf. cxvii. 2, The truth of the Lord endureth for-ever. Ps. cxi. 3; 5; 7, 8. His righteousness endureth for-ever. He will ever be mindful of his covenant. —*

The works of his hands are verity and judgment. All his commandments are sure.

They

They stand fast for-ever and ever ; and are SERM.
done in truth and uprightness. Ps. xxxvi. III.

5. *Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens,*
and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

James i. 17. With whom there is no va-
riableness, or shadow of turning.

The decrees of GOD are immutable ; be-
cause, having all power, and all knowlege,
he can never resolve upon any thing, which
shall be either not possible, or not reason-
able, to be accomplished. He can, by no
force, be over-ruled ; he can, by no sur-
prize, be prevented ; he can, by no un-
foreseen alteration in the reasons of things,
be, himself, changed in his purposes. Ps.
xxxiii. 11. The counsel of the Lord stand-
eth for-ever, the thoughts of his heart unto
all generations. Job xxiii. 13. He is in
one mind, and who can turn him ? And
what his soul desireth, even that he doeth.

The moral laws of GOD, likewise, are
immutable ; because they are founded up-
on immutable reasons, viz. the eternal
difference of good and evil, and the ori-
ginal nature of things : and tend always to
the same regular end, the order and hap-
piness of the whole creation.

It

SERM. It is true, *the law of Moses*, and other
 III. positive laws of God, were appointed for
 a time, when the state of things so required: and were changed, or abolished, in a different state of things. But that does not argue any fickleness, or mutability in God. For he, who is *unchangeably* wise, powerful, and good, will vary his positive laws, as the state of things requires.

Christianity is calculated for all nations; and suited to all generations, from the time of its being first planted until the consummation of all things. And, therefore, it is justly said, *Heb. xiii. 8, 9. Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and for-ever. Be not carried away with divers and strange doctrines.*

God is *unchangeable in his promises*. If they are *unconditional*, they will be accomplished; because they are founded upon the original and fixed designs of all-wise providence. Thus, concerning the promise made to *Abraham*, *Heb. vi. 13, &c. Because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself;— to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel. Numb. xxiii. 19. Hath he said, and shall*

shall he not do it? Or, hath he spoken; and shall he not make it good? Rom. xi. SERM. III.

28, 29. As touching the election, they are beloved, for the fathers sake. For these gifts and calling of God are without repentance; because they are parts of the general scheme of providence, in the government of the world, through successive ages.

Of the same kind is that promise of God made to King David. Ps. lxxxix. 28, 29. My mercy will I keep for him, for evermore; and my covenant (concerning the Messias) shall stand fast. His seed also, will I make to indure for-ever; and his throne as the days of heaven.

If the promises of God are conditional, and the condition is complied withal, they will certainly be performed: and therefore, in regard to them, God is unchangeable.

Lastly, God is immutable, with regard to his general threatnings; because, as his love to virtue is unalterable; so his hatred to vice is irreconcilable: and, because these threatnings are often prophetic parts of the general scheme of his providence.

III. I pro-

SERM.

III.

III. I proceede to answer an objection against GOD's *immutability*, drawn from those texts of *scripture*, which seem to speak of GOD in a different manner from those already cited ; and to represent him, on the contrary, as frequently *repenting* and *changing* his purpose. Gen. vi. 5, 6. GOD saw, that, the wickedness of men was great in the earth, — it repented the Lord that he had made man upon the earth ; and it grieved him at the heart. 1 Sam. xv. 35. The Lord repented that he had made Saul king over Israel. Numb. xiv. 30, 34. concerning a whole generation of the people of Israel, GOD declared, — Doubtless, ye shall not come into the land, concerning which I sware, to make you dwell therein ; — and ye shall know the altering of my purpose. Jer. xxvi. 13. Amend your ways and your doings ; — and the Lord will repent of the evil, which he hath pronounced against you. Jonah iii. 10. GOD saw their works, that they turned from their evil way ; and GOD repented of the evil, that he had said, he would do unto them ; and did it not.

The

The answer is plain. Those promises SERM.
are always conditional. And the immuta- III.
bility of God, with regard to them, con-
sists not in the unalterableness of the
things; but in the unchangeableness of the
condition, upon which they are to be per-
formed. *Jer. xviii. 7, &c. II. At what in-
stant, I shall speak, concerning a nation,—
to pull down and to destroy it; if that na-
tion turn from their evil, I will repent
of the evil, which I thought to do
unto them. And, at what instant, I shall
speak, concerning a nation, — to build
and to plant it: if it do evil in my sight;
— then will I repent of the good, where-
with I said I would benefit them.*

The expressions of God's *repenting and
grieving, &c.* — are only figurative; in
condescension to the weakness of our appre-
hensions: signifying not any change in
God himself; but only a difference of the
event, with regard to us.

IV. I procede now, to make proper
application.

I. *The unchangeableness of God*, in his
being and promises, is matter of comfort
to good men.

SERM. This is the inference, in the text. *I*

III. *am the Lord, I change not: therefore the sons of Jacob are not consumed.* Ps. xxxiii.

11, 12. *The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever.—Blessed is the nation, whose God is the Lord; and the people, whom he has chosen for his own inheritance.* Ps. xxxvi. 6, 7. *Thy righteousness is like the strong mountains;—therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.* Heb. vi. 17, 18. *Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew, unto the heirs of promise, the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath. That, by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold upon the hope that is set before us.* Tit. i. 2. *In hope of eternal life; which God, that cannot lie, promised, before the world began.*

2. *The unchangeableness of God, in his threatnings, speaks terror to impenitent sinners.*

He will, by no means, clear the guilty: nor can, by any application, be reconciled to sin. No bribe, no force, no artifice

artifice, no length of time, can change his SERM,
 hatred towards unrighteous actions; or III.
 hinder him, without the sinner's true re-
 pentance, from punishing the unrighteous
 man— *Except ye repent, ye shall all like-
 wise perish.*

3. GOD's *unchangeable goodness* is an in-
 couragement to the truly penitent.

4. From this attribute arises the absolute
 necessity of *repentance*.

It is impossible that GOD should *change*.
 The sinner may alter: and must do so, or
 perish.



...no length of time, can change his ...
...towards ... actions, ...
...him, without the least ...
...punishing ...
...of the ...

3. God's unending love is an in-
cessant love to the whole creation.

1. I have this assurance that the abolition
necessity of resistance.
2. It is impossible that God should change.
The first may alter; and man do for
himself.



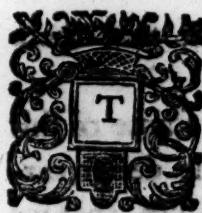
S E R M O N IV.

The unity of God.



DEUT. iv. 39.

There is none else.



THE ATTRIBUTES, which SERM. arise from GOD's existing IV. *by absolute necessity; are eternality, immensity, immutability, and unity.*

We are now to treat of the last of them: *i. e. unity.* It would be an affront to the human understanding, to attempt to explain what we are to understand by *unity*. There is no idea, that we have, more easy and simple. And to endeavor to set it in a clearer light, would be to obscure it. When this is attributed to God, it stands

SERM. to denote one single, all-perfect intelligent

IV. agent: and we know what that carries in it. I shall not therefore endeavor, any farther, to explain this attribute: but shall procede to set before you, the arguments, by which it may be made evident, that there is *but one*, all-perfect Being, to which the name of GOD is given. And, in the proof of this, I shall consider,

I. The arguments, that *reason* affords.

II. The confirmation of it, by express passages of *the sacred writings*.

I. I shall endeavor to prove, that there is *but one* GOD, from *reason*.

When we reflect upon the frame of this world, there appears to be one design carried on, by every order of Beings, that we are conversant with. There is a plain connection and dependence of one thing upon another, through all parts of the earth, and in the visible heavens: the disposition of the air, and sea, and winds; the motion of the sun, moon, and stars; and the useful vicissitudes of seasons, for the regular productions of the various fruits of the earth;

earth; may make it evidently appear, e-
 ven to mean capacities, that all things are
 under the direction and dominion of *one* SERM. IV.
 God. This has been offered by some
 considerable writers, to prove that there
 is *but one* God.

But to this, it may be objected "that,
 " if there are more Beings, who are infi-
 " nitely perfect, they will always think
 " the same way, and be knit together
 " with an intire love."

Answer. It is true, that, in things of a
 moral nature, this must happen. But,
 in natural things, capable of no morality;
 as in creating the world sooner or later,
 and the different system of things, differ-
 ent Beings, supposed to be infinitely per-
 fect, might have different thoughts.

I shall not, therefore, lay so much
 stress upon this reasoning, as some writers
 do: but procede to another argument
 from *reason*, to prove *the unity of God*,
 which is this.

The idea, that we have of God, is,
 that he is *supreme and infinitely perfect*:
 For a superiority over all other Beings

SERM. comes so naturally into the idea of *supre-*

IV. *macy and infinite perfection*; that we cannot separate the one from the other. A Being, therefore, that has not all other Beings inferior and subordinate to it, cannot be *supreme and infinitely perfect*. From hence, therefore, we may infer that there is *but one God*.

Again; *The unity of God* evidently follows from his existing by *absolute necessity*. It carries in it a contradiction, that he should not exist: and that arises from the plenitude or amplitude of his excellencies and perfections. *Absolute necessity* is simple and uniform, without any possibility of *deformity*. Variety, or multiplicity, must arise from some external cause; and, therefore, be inconsistent with *self-existence*. To suppose two Beings existing *necessarily*, implies this plain contradiction; that each of them being independent of the other, they may, either of them, be supposed to exist alone: so that it will be no contradiction to imagine the other not to exist. And consequently neither of them will be *necessarily existing*.

Other

Other Beings there may be, innumerable; besides the *one infinite, self-existent Being*. SERM. IV.

But no other Being can be *self-existent*. For so it would be individually the same; at the same time that it is supposed to be different. If we should imagine that there may be two Beings, that are *immense*, and *eternal*, and *every way infinite*; I am apt to think that would be imposing upon our minds. For, after we had thought of one Being *immense, eternal*, and *every way infinite*; the trying to suppose another such Being, would be only to go over the same idea, a second time. Which would not come out another Being; but only our thinking of the one infinite Being more than once.

Again; if there were two, there must be some way to distinguish the one from the other. And this must arise from one's having perfections, that the other has not: and then it will follow, that that Being, which has the highest perfections, is properly and strictly God, and the other cannot be conceived to be possessed of those boundless perfections, which must be attributed

SERM. tributed to him, to whom the name of

IV. GOD is given.

Thus I think that *reason* does sufficiently establish this great article, *that there is one GOD, and that there is none else.*

2. This may be confirmed by express passages of the *sacred writings.*

Deut. vi. 4. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our GOD is one Lord: Or Jehovah, our GOD, is one Jehovah. There is but one, to whom the name Jehovah (which term carries in it a fulness of Being) may be justly applied. And he is the one GOD. This is otherwise expressed, Is. xlv. 6; 8. I am the first, and I am the last; and, besides me, there is no GOD.—Is there a GOD besides me? Yea, there is no God. I know not any; i. e. all, that are called gods, besides me, are but Idols; the fancies and inventions of men. Is. xlv. 6. That they may know, from the rising of the sun, and from the West, that there is no God besides me. I am the Lord; and there is none else.

This is the strain of the *New Testament*, as well as the *Old*. *John xvii. 3. And this is Life eternal, that they might know thee,*

thee, the only true GOD. Our Savior, in **SERM.**
 this chapter, addressees these words to his **IV.**
Father. These words spake Jesus; and he

lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said;
"Father, the hour is come: glorifie thy
son, that thy son also may glorifie thee.
As thou hast given him power over all flesh;
that he should give eternal life to as many
as thou hast given him. And this is life
eternal [this is the way to attain endless
and complete happiness] That they might
know thee, the only true GOD: and Jesus
Christ, whom thou hast sent. This, I think,
 • *is strongly implied, Matt. iv. 10. Then*
said Jesus unto him, "Get thee hence Sa-
tan: for it is writen, Thou shalt wor-
ship the Lord thy GOD; and him only
"shalt thou serve:" in as much as he is the
only true GOD. I Cor. viii. 4, &c. We
know that an idol is nothing in the world;
and there is none other GOD, but one. For,
though there be, that are called Gods, [by
the Gentiles] whether in heaven, or on
earth (as there be Gods many and Lords
many) [Gods many, i. e. many celestial
sovereign Gods, in heaven: And Lords
many, i. e. many Mediators, many Baalim,

or

SERM. or Lords-agents, and presidents over earth-

IV. ly things] *But to us [Christians] there is but ONE GOD, the Father, of whom are all things; and we in him: and one Lord Jesus Christ [that is one Mediator] by whom all things are disposed; and we by him. And, to name no more, Ephes. iv. 6. One GOD and father of all: who is above all, and through all, and in you all.*

You see, then, that it is the voice of reason, that there is *but one*, to whom the name of GOD is to be given, in the proper sense of it; and this is also expressed with great clearness in *scripture*, and runs thro' all *revelation*.

I come now to make reflections.

1. We may from hence see, that there is a just reason for that order of worship, which is prescribed to us, in the *Christian Religion*.

We are to address *the Father*, by (or through *Christ the Mediator*. These are the directions, that are given us, by those doctrines, which were the effects of the illumination of the spirit.

GOD *alone* is the supreme object of worship. "*Him only shalt thou serve.*" And

as there is one God, the supreme object of worship; so there is only one mediator between God and man; the man Christ Jesus. SERM. IV.

This worshipping of God through Jesus Christ, is the settled way and fixed method of worship: which the Christian doctrine has prescribed to us. And we ought to keep close to our rule.

2. We may see, from hence, the importance of this point, *that there is but one God.*

All, that are under the directions of *reason* or *revelation*, must see this settled, as the first principle in *religion*, and as the ground of a true and well-directed worship. And it is of great consequence to us, never to admit any thing that shall overturn this fundamental point; a point, so strongly confirmed by *reason* and *scripture*. No idea can be clearer than that of *unity*. "That there is but one supreme Being," is the voice of *reason*. And it is the fundamental doctrine of the Old and New Testament. Whatever, therefore, contradicts it, ought not to be admitted; or ought to be discarded,

3. From

SERM. 3. From hence it follows that it was the

IV. effect of great neglect of the use of *reason*,
 that gave rise to *idolatry*; which shews the
 absurdity and folly of it.

There is nothing in nature but what makes it probable that there is *but one* God. In reflecting upon the beauty and order, which appears in the frame of this world, we are led to acknowledge that there must be *one intelligent Being*. And that there is *but one*, appears from the very idea, that we have, of the first Being, as most perfect, and as the supreme governor. And, therefore, when men began to imagine that this first cause did impart to Beings of a different nature, powers to influence their happiness; and they terminated their worship in them; without doubt, this conduct was inconsistent, and contrary to a true train of reasoning. For they might easily have seen, that the sun, moon, and stars, could not exist by such an absolute necessity, as that, by which the first, all-perfect mind must be conceived to exist. And, therefore, they ought to have looked on them, as the effects of this first, all-perfect Being; from whence they might have

have seen the fitness of rising, by them, to SERM.
the acknowledgement and worship of the IV.
one true and living God.

It is certain, that *Idolatry* was in the world, in a few generations after the flood: and was, at the first, attended with several of the same ill consequences, as in after-ages. But, when-ever it came in; it was the effect of not carrying their thoughts home, and reasoning well. They would join with *Deity* some sensible representations: and, from thence, because they supposed their happiness did arise from such inferior Beings, they forgot the first cause; or, at least, paid a worship, that terminated in Beings, which the first cause had made. And that, without doubt, was contrary to true reasoning.

It is certain, that, while we are in this imbodied state, we want something to fix and settle our attention. God was so kind and good, that, in the first ages, there was a symbol of his presence. *The word* appeared in glory: and, by this, they were assisted to entertain sentiments of *the one* God, that were worthy of him.

At

SERM.

IV.

At first, their minds, by foolish imaginations, were greatly darkened; and they disliked the worship of *the true God*. I call the imaginations of idolaters *foolish*; because they saw evidently, even in the earliest ages, that what was external and pompous, would not be pleasing to the great governor of the world; where integrity and real virtue was wanting. That was discovered to some of the first of mankind. When *Cain* and *Abel* made their offerings before the presence of God; *Abel's* offering was accepted, and *Cain's* was rejected. One, by the glory, was burnt up: but there was not the least shine of glory upon the sacrifice of the other. This occasioned great resentment in *Cain*. And how did it operate? He grew jealous; and thought this was conferring upon his younger brother, advantages, which he imagined he had a right to claim, by his seniority.

To set him right: God favored him with a voice from the glory; and, in this converse, with which he was honored, the question was, "What makes thee angry?" "What reason hast thou to resent it? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted?"

“cepted? if thou doest ill, thou art ac- SERM.
“cused by the rules of reasoning and con- IV.
“science.” Thou art only, by this,

taught, that thou must not lay any stress upon external worship and ritual observances, unless they spring from an honest mind, and an heart full of Love to God.

The want of true reasoning, has been the occasion of bringing in *Idolatry*, and the pageantry of it; and it leads still to greater degeneracy and corruption of mind; till at last (in idolatrous countries, where they worship the work of their own hands) they form such sentiments of *Deity*, as favor their particular irregular inclinations. It is, therefore, represented by the apostle *Paul* in the justest manner, *Rom. i. 28.* *as they did not like to retain God in their knowlege, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not proper: being filled with all unrighteousness, &c.* Whatever knowlege they arrived to, they were not influenced by it, in their conduct; but ran into great vices. And so God gave them up to (*that is, he let them go on in*) the false imaginations of their corrupted and depraved minds.

SERM.

IV.

It is possible to say many plausible things, to colour over some sorts of *Idolatry*; but, when we attend to strict reasoning, we shall find that such arguments are not solid.

“ We can take notice of the profusion
 “ of the divine goodness; that munifi-
 “ cence, which he has expressed to his
 “ creatures, and why may we not take
 “ notice of the instruments of it? Why
 “ may we not worship the sun, to express
 “ the regard, which we have to that lu-
 “ minary; which imparts to us what is
 “ necessary for our subsistence and com-
 “ fort? Why may not illiterate men, that
 “ cannot read books, be instructed by
 “ picture, and images? Why may they
 “ not be excited to follow good examples,
 “ by beholding the pictures and statues of
 “ persons eminent for virtue and piety?
 “ And help their imaginations, and fix
 “ their thoughts to attention, by worship-
 “ ing before them?”

To be sure this reasoning is quite wrong; because all those material Beings around us, that conspire to make us happy, do not give those benefits to us by choice. The heavenly

heavenly bodies roll on, in their several **SERM.**
courses, directed by consummate wisdom, **IV.**

sustained by the first power that made them; by him, kept in their proper orbits, and continued in their rotations; so that we must see it reasonable to rise to the acknowledgement of *one* God, and paying worship to him alone. And we must not set up *Idol-Gods*, in opposition to, or in conjunction with, *the one true God*: neither ought we to worship him, after an idolatrous way and manner. We should not represent him under visible and corporeal images; or imagine *that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by the art, or device, of man.*

Worshipping before images has ever clouded men's minds, instead of assisting them to a rational homage. And it is *idolatry*, to apply to God, thro' false and idol-mediators; in diminution to the honor of the one true mediator, whom alone God has expressly appointed.

It is very evident that men ran soon and early into the doctrine of *mediators between God and man*. And this appears to me to be the consequence of having offended the

SERM. *one true God, a Being of the most per-*

IV. *fect moral character. Nothing is, so natural a consequence of guilt, as fear. And there is nothing that appears to rise more naturally from fear, than a backwardness to apply to that Being, whom we are conscious of having offended. This appears to be the rise of the many strange laws, and remarkable customs, that were entertained and imbraced by the idolatrous nations. For they were not so stupid, as not to see (at least, the philosophers and wise men among them) that there was one Supreme Being.*

God has been pleased to take methods, to bring mankind to a reasonable temper and conduct; and to that happiness, which arises from their own wise behaviour and conduct. And, in condescension, he therefore sent *his son*; and appointed him to be the one mediator between God and man: to put an end to the superstition, which reigned among the idolatrous nations; they having many mediators. In revelation, he describes his great character, represents him as *the word, by whom*

whom he made the world: and, therefore, SERM.
that he is worthy of being the mediator IV:
of mankind.

A mediator stands to signify, "one that
"transacts an affair between two." In
this, our Savior is justly styled, *a mediator*.
For it is, by him, that the whole doctrine
of the Father, in the Christian Religion,
has been promulgated. Moreover, it is
plain that that part of idolatry, which pre-
vailed among the *heathen*, of worshipping
by a variety of mediators, of their own
devising, appears, upon reflection, to be
• directly contrary to true reason. For, sup-
posing that *Deity* makes use of various
creatures, as instruments, to impart bles-
sings to us; we have no ground to pay ho-
mage to the instruments; unless he appoints
it; and commands us so to do. And, there-
fore, the making use of false mediators is,
no doubt, one kind of *idolatry*. However,
since there is *but one true God*, and he
the object of supreme worship, we may
easily see the absurdity of *a plurality of*
Gods; and of paying that homage to a va-
riety of objects, which is due only to the
supreme.

SERM. And, if we take in a subordinate wor-

IV. ship; yet, under the light of nature, or law of reason, there was nothing of this settled. And therefore it was altogether without ground. But, now, it is settled by revelation; let us keep close to the divine appointment.

When we worship *Christ*, let us remember, that that worship should be terminated in the Father. For we worship Christ, *as the son, as the lamb slain and put to death*; and designed to be so, before the ages began to roll.

As long as we keep close to the divine appointment, there is no reason to accuse us of idolatry; nor can such a charge be fixed upon us. For we worship the Father, by the son, and through the spirit. And, when there is, in scripture, any instance of worship paid *to the son*, it is paid to him *as the lamb of God; as the sent of the Father*; and so ultimately paid to God.

We may from hence see, how proper it is for us to express our constant regard to this *one* God, by frequently worshipping, and always obeying, him.

There

There is nothing appears more absurd, SERM.
 than every moment to be supported IV.
 and live, by the goodness of another Being, and yet to forget all regards to him. Nothing is more monstrous than to use the powers which we have, from the bounty of God, in opposition to him, and in a course of rebellious behavior. Surely, it becomes us frequently to offer our tribute of prayer and praise to him; and always to love and fear him. There is nothing in this but what is built upon a solid foundation; the same foundation, as the exercise of justice and benevolence to one another; which we are obliged to practise, because it is fit and reasonable. And is it not equally fit and reasonable that we should praise and glorify that Being, from whom we derive our very Being, and every benefit? — especially as this our address has a tendency to form our temper to that perfection, which is necessary to render us for-ever perfect and happy?

I would conclude, with observing, that the doctrine of *revelation* appears exactly consistent with what the light of nature

SERM. and reason, duly attended to, would lead

IV. us to.

There is this advantage, however, in revelation, that, if any important point has been obscured, by the false reasoning and superstitious practice of mankind; revelation comes into our aid, and sets it in a clear light; and very often with such circumstances as may make it appear in a fuller and more illustrious manner.

Let us, therefore, neither disregard the original law of reason, which God has placed in our make; nor ever reject the super-added advantages, which revelation has favored us with: especially when we find that there is no inconsistency in revelation, and the plain and clear dictates of right reason: but they mutually explain and confirm each other; and lead us to the knowledge of the *one* great fountain of Being and happiness, whom to know is *life eternal*.

happy is the man who is acquainted with the doctrine of revelation appears exactly consistent with what the light of reason

S E R.



S E R M O N V.

The happiness of God.



T I M. i. ii.

--- The blessed God.



WE now procede to the third **SERM.**
division of the attributes. **V.**

There are some perfections that are to be ascribed to God, which arise from a combination of several other attributes, or perfections: viz. *happiness, glory, majesty, and dominion or sovereignty.*

That, which we are now to treat on, is *Happiness*. In discoursing upon it, we shall,

I. Explain

SERM. I. Explain what is meant by *happiness*,
 V. as applied to God.

II. Show you that this is the effect of the combination of the perfections, or attributes, of *Deity*, which we have already treated upon. Or, in other words, set before you the ingredients of the perfection of *Happiness*, which is to be ascribed to God.

III. I shall attempt to prove that this is to be ascribed unto God.

IV. Make practical reflections.

I. I am to explain what is meant by *happiness*, as applied to God. It is necessary that we should consider *happiness* at its highest pitch, when we view it as applicable to God. And, then, the notion of it is no other than "a fixed and invariable state of contentment and satisfaction, complacency and delight; resulting from the secure possession and enjoyment of all that is good and desirable; or, in other words, of all excellency and perfection." All this must be taken into the notion of *the happiness of Deity*. For, as we have just reason to apprehend God to be *happy*, so we must conceive

conceive that he has *happiness* in the perfectest manner. SERM 2

W

Other Beings may be happy in proportion to their state and condition; but we cannot conceive that it is unalterable. This must, however, be ascribed to God. And I have not described *contentment*, as the only ingredient in *happiness*: but we must, in this term, include *pleasure*, *satisfaction*, and *delight*. And this must be, in the highest degree, attributed to God; when we say, *He is blessed, or happy*.

- II. Let us consider the ingredients of this *happiness*: whereby it will be evident, beyond all doubt, that this attribute is the result of the other perfections, which we have already proved to belong to God.

We must suppose his *knowledge* to be infinite: and of consequence, he cannot but know what are the necessary ingredients of perfect and complete *happiness*; and when he himself thoroughly enjoys it.

If we take a view of *men*, we shall find, that they pursue *happiness* in various shapes, and by very different methods; and the greatest part of mankind mistake wherein true felicity consists.

2. When

SERM. 2. When men have right apprehensions

V! wherein *happiness* consists, still they feel something wanting. This must be what every one experiences; in regard that we are not sufficient for ourselves; and consequently cannot have perfect *happiness*.

To perfect *happiness*, such a power must be supposed as is necessary to do whatever conduces to the enjoyment of it; and to controul whatever would be an hindrance of it, or endanger the constant continuance of it. This power is plainly to be attributed to God.

There is nothing, which stands connected with perfect happiness; but he can effect it. There is no power, that can oppose him, or check his felicity; or lessen it, or prevent his having all possible security of being, in the highest degree, happy for ever.

3. Some, indeed, extremely mistake: and, when they have a considerable number of ingredients towards *happiness*, are so defective in wisdom, as not to know how to make use of what they have, to render them happy. And, for that reason, they neglect what is solid and substantial, and pursue *happiness* in empty shadows. This can

can never be apprehended of *Deity*. For, SERM.
as he has unbounded *knowledge*; and con- V.
sequently knows wherein *perfect happiness*
does consist; and *almighty power*; so he
has *unerring wisdom*, to direct his *power*,
in such a manner as effectually to conduce
to this great end.

He cannot be possessed of *perfect happiness*, who wants skill to compass, and secure, and make the proper use of, all the materials, which are necessary to constitute it. — Which imperfection must be far removed from *the only wise God*. He has such consummate wisdom, as that he knows how to adapt and order things in the best manner and most skilful way, to promote and secure the highest felicity.

4. Envy and malevolence, which are destructive of *happiness*, are at an infinite remove from him. There never can arise, in the mind of *Deity*, any contractedness of disposition. He must be ever kind and good; and disposed, as far as shall be consistent with his unbounded and perfect wisdom, to communicate and impart whatever may tend to render the Beings, that he, out of goodness, has made, all happy, according to their capacity.

Could

SERM.

V.

Could we imagine any thing of a malignant and envious temper in *Deity*, (which indeed is impossible) we might then say, "that he could not possess complete happiness."

5. We must conceive of God, as having a most perfect moral character; and possessed of all virtue, in the highest and most transcendent degree.

No intelligent Being can be possessed of complete happiness, that has not a perfect moral character.

We cannot suppose perfect happiness could be attributed to *Deity*, was he not at an infinite distance from what is immoral, and possessed of every moral excellence.

To suppose an intelligent agent to determine and act any thing, which is contrary to what is apprehended by him to be right and fit; viz. against truth, and faithfulness, justice and goodness, is to introduce a variance between the mind, and the determination and action: and, of consequence, disapprobation and disquiet. But since the moral character of God is perfect and invariable, as his other perfections, he must have the highest self-complacency, and

and the greatest and most immutable delight. SERM.
Or, in other words, he must be perfectly V.
possessed of absolute and complete happiness. — Especially, when it is added,

6. As God is, in every other respect, perfect, he is, also, *immutable*. There can be no change in him. How, then, can we suppose that there can be an alteration in his happiness? He cannot alter for the better; for he is all-perfect. He cannot change, for the worse; For it is not conceivable, that a Being of infinite understanding and power, should ever change or alter for the worse. Since, then, in all his perfections, he is invariable; and from this attribute, his *happiness* is without any apprehension of an abatement, or diminution; we must conceive, that *happiness*, in the most perfect degree, must be attributed to him.

Thus you see that this attribute, of his *happiness*, arises from a combination of the other perfections of God; and is the result of them.

III. I now

SERM.

V.

III. I now come to the proof that *this perfection* is to be ascribed unto God. But every one must see, that it is not necessary that I should dwell long upon this. For, by proving him to be *happy*, as possessing all possible perfections, that are necessary to the happiness of an intelligent agent; I have, in some measure, prevented myself: and we may easily find that this appears to be congruous both to *reason* and *revelation*.

This is acknowledged by *the wise heathens*: nothing being more frequent in their writings than to call *Deity*, *beatissimam & perfectissimam naturam*; *the most blessed and perfect nature*. This was the method, which they took to find out, what properties were fit to be attributed to God; and what not; to consider what things are consistent with *happiness*; and the reverse.

All the *philosophers* represented God to be possessed of *happiness*, and to remain for-ever so. *Epicurus* himself, who entertained not the worthiest notions of God, professed

professed to believe the *happiness* of the divine nature. Nay, he carried this attribute so high, as even not to have given God the trouble of making, or governing, the world. And, from a low, indolent temper, he and his disciples imagined their *Deity*, as having all ease and tranquillity; and that it was not agreeable to their mind, to have this interrupted, or broken in upon; either by creation or government.

There are indeed, but two places in *Scripture*, wherein this is asserted of God; viz. that he is *μακάριος* *blessed*, or *happy*.

- The probable reason may be, because the idea, of his being *happy*, is so generally acknowledged, and appears to be so reasonably applied to God, that they did not apprehend there was a necessity of multiplying assertions of this character's belonging to God.

We find it in our text, *The blessed God*.

And *1 Tim. vi. 15*—The *blessed* (or happy) and *only potentate*; *king of kings* and *Lord of Lords*.

In many other places, indeed, this term *blessed*, is ascribed to God; but in a quite different sense. See *Mark xiv. 61*.

SERM. Rom. i. 25. and ix. 5. 2 Cor. xi. 31. In

V. all these places, the word is *εὐαριστησ*, not *μακροπ*, and signifies *celebrated*, or *praised*.

However; in two places of the first epistle to *Timothy*, it is expressly ascribed unto God. And, by consequence, the scripture, every where declares the *happiness of God*, where-ever it speaks of the excellency and perfection of his Being.

We may therefore, conclude, both from *reason* and *scripture*, that *God is a perfectly happy Being*.

V. I shall now procede to the last head, which is to make practical remarks.

1. We may see the absurdity of those, who would deny the Being of a God; or the unreasonableness of *Atheism*.

There is nothing (if the subject was not too melancholy) would give to a thinking person more pleasure and diversion; than to see the bunglingness of those, who espouse *Atheism*; and yet attempt to form this world: what difficulties it puts them to; what shifts and evasions they make use of. You must allow them that *chance* rules: you must grant them that *atoms* are formed;

formed; and then admit of *motion* also. SERM.
And, when they have gained all these, V.
they are hard put to it, out of them all, 
to create this world, with all things in it.

If *atoms* move in infinite space, it is reasonable to suppose, that they should move on, in a direct line; that being the first law of motion. And, if so; they might move on eternally; and never find out, or fall into, such a structure as *this world* is.

If we allow them so far as to imagine that these moved obliquely: and formed the material world, the sun, moon, and stars, with this earth; and all the inferior creatures upon it; yet from whence comes consciousness, or thought? Did *chance*, and *motion*, and *atoms* form *man* into an active, conscious, thinking Being? into an intelligent, moral agent? and continue men upon earth in so many regularly successive generations? To what ridicule do such men expose themselves.

But, not to pursue this design, of exposing them, as they justly deserve: I would here take notice that these *Atheists* are extremely cruel and unkind to their fellow-creatures.



SERM.

V.

That Being, who is *happy*, must raise in my mind an expectation from it. *His happiness* springs from his not having any contracted disposition; but the most extensive beneficence. And would any wise or humane person have such a Being out of the world? He is a Being of a perfect moral character; and the object, therefore, of the highest love. For it is impossible for any reasonable Being to love an immoral character; or to disapprove of a perfectly moral character; though they may think proper to allow themselves in the practice of immorality. I could appeal to the consciences of such, whether they can have an inward esteem of those that go into the pursuit of what is immoral. There cannot be *happiness* without having a good *moral* character. And, as *Deity* is perfectly happy, in consequence of his perfect moral character, he must be the object of the highest love. And, surely, we must imagine it is better to live in a world, that is under the direction of a kind and good Being, that has perfect happiness himself, and perfect rectitude; than in a state, where only chance rules. To be in a world, where there is no *wisdom* to direct; where

where there is no *goodness* to engage a concern; no *power* to effect what wisdom and goodness dictate;—surely those persons very little reflect, how much mischief they are doing to mankind, to persuade them that there is no such Being, as a God, who is infinitely wise, holy, powerful, just and good. If there be *no* God, no Being that is all-perfect, there can be no complete happiness; no pattern, or source, of it.

How melancholy this must be, may easily be discerned by every considerate person.

2. *From the perfect happiness of God*, we may form a just hope of our attaining *perfect happiness*, in a future world.

Since it is the promise of him, who is perfectly happy himself; and whose happiness results from such perfections, as make it appear very consistent to form a solid hope and expectation of *that interminable happiness*, that he has, by his promise, raised in our minds an expectation of,

SERM. We cannot suppose he wants *power* to

V. do it: we cannot apprehend that he will be *unfaithful*. For, if so, he cannot be *happy* himself: because he will want an essential part of a moral character. We cannot suppose that he will not be faithful to his word; that is inconsistent to his goodness and beneficence. So that you see, our hope of *perfect happiness*, in the future world, as far as our powers are capable of, is built upon a very solid foundation, no less than *the happiness of God himself*.

In considering *the happiness of God*; we plainly see wherein *the true happiness* of an intelligent Being consists; and from whence it must arise. It must spring from what renders such a Being perfect. And, since finite Beings are capable only of limited powers of felicity, they cannot attain to perfect happiness. That is to be found in *Deity* alone. But, if I use my powers in the best manner I can; and attain such a resemblance of God, in his moral character, as to secure his favor, I shall arrive at a proportionate degree of felicity; and am certain that God will make me as happy as my faculties are capable of.

3. We

3. We may remark the folly of those, SERM.
that expect *happiness*, in a way of vice. V.

Happiness must follow perfection. It is so in *Deity*. He is perfectly happy; because he has all perfections in the highest degree. Whoever conceives that he can be *happy*, when he is engaged in a course of vice, must expect happiness in a way inconsistent to the truth and reason of things.

The happiness of an intelligent Being must consist in some measure in knowledge, especially in the knowledge of those things that stand connected with right temper and conduct. And he must take in an acting reasonably; a conforming to what is right and fit. This, I think, is evident. For I would appeal to any man of vice, whether, at certain times, this thought does not arise? And whether the consequence of this is not great distress? and whether he does not feel it necessary, then, to run away from himself; because he cannot bear his own reflections?

From these considerations, it appears clear and indisputable, that there is no such thing as *happiness* for any intelligent agent,

SERM. but by using his powers agreeable to moral
 V. perfections.

Nay; it is in vain for us to expect *happiness* from God, without being brought to a resemblance of him, in the moral perfections of his nature.

Do you imagine that God will give *happiness* to his creatures, in a way that is contrary to the foundation of his own *happiness*? We must suppose there must be a change somewhere. In God, it cannot be. For he must have all perfection, immutably; from whence perfect *happiness* arises. The change, then, must be in the sinner; or else he must, of consequence, expect misery and distress.

Nothing is more clear than that we cannot be happy, till we are well with ourselves. When we pursue and act any thing, that we cannot reflect upon with pleasure, we are laying a foundation of unavoidable misery. The mind must approve of its principles, its temper and actions, or else it cannot be possessed of *happiness*. For us to act one way, and the mind to think another way, and disapprove of such an action,

tion, must certainly create that, which SER. 12.
will occasion misery and unhappiness. W

I say the more upon this; because I would not have any, that profess the *Christian religion*, imagine, that even this dispensation of grace and mercy can make them happy, while they retain the love and practice of vice.

- Many are apt to fly to something, from which they flatter themselves they shall derive *happiness*: when they are still determined to indulge some course of vice, or irregular conduct. It is impossible that
- there should be right sentiments, when there is any such design and view: because, whoever can think that there is, or may be, any substitute, to excuse their pursuit of real holiness; they must, by this sentiment, plainly contradict *the happiness of Deity*; and the very design of God's sending his son into the world. His sending his son was, undoubtedly, to raise us to a proper degree of perfection; and thereby to a capacity of *happiness*.

We are capable of *happiness*, not merely as Beings indued with *knowledge*; but only when true sentiments are followed with a
right

SERM. right temper and behavior. This stands

V! so connected with *the nature of things*, that
 no *revelation* can be supposed to run counter to it. Therefore *Christians*, that imagine they can be *happy*, without sincere and extensive *morality* impose upon themselves. How low a sense soever they may have of *moral virtue*; it is *that*, which must make us like to God; and without which, we cannot be happy. So strong, so inseparable, is the connection between a right temper and behavior and the *happiness* of heaven, that there is no dissolving this connection.

To attempt it with success, we must overturn the very reason and nature of things; and alter our most just ideas of *Deity*; and hope contrary to all reasonable foundation of hope.

Surprizing, then! to hope for *happiness*, without sincere piety and extensive virtue.

It is true, indeed, we cannot attain perfection and happiness; above; equal to that of the *Deity*: but we may have *happiness* in proportion; if our powers are rightly directed, and our practice is truly virtuous.

Creatures

Creatures cannot be perfectly *happy*, in SERM.
their measure and proportion, without V.
Deity; without his favor and approbation: ~~~~~

— and the reason is very plain; — be-
cause we are creatures; we are dependents;
we have not a sufficiency for our own hap-
piness. We have not *wisdom* enough for
our own conduct; nor have we *power*
enough for our own defence; and there-
fore, tho' the true way is by *holiness*, yet
we must always take in *Deity*. His favor
is necessary to all the *happiness*, which we
are capable of attaining. And there-

• fore,

Lastly, we may see, from hence, that
those pursue *happiness*, in a true and right
method, who pursue it, in endeavoring to
resemble *Deity* in holiness; and thereby to
be secure of his favor, who is immutably
happy in himself; and who can confer an
eternal happiness upon his votaries and ser-
vants.

Let us not deceive ourselves in a matter
of such consequence. We all desire, and
pursue after, *happiness*: and it is amazing
that there should be an infinite variety of
ways, in which *happiness* is pursued; where
there

SERM. there is but one to attain it. And it is

V. perfectly ridiculous to suppose that this
 can result from what is only external.

The happiness of reasonable Beings must be from a right disposition and course of action; and not from any thing that is external.

I am far from entertaining any thing of *Stoicism*. I have no intention to depreciate any of the blessings of heaven; that can, in any degree, influence to our *happiness*. But we must know wherein our *happiness* consists; before we can set about the pursuit of it.

Indeed, men are taught early to pursue shadows and butterflies, (mere empty trifles;) and, when they have them, they appear to be as soon tired of them. And so the child goes on to the man: and many fall into the grave, before ever they fix, or settle, in their minds, what is the right way of becoming *happy*. This is the consequence of the deplorable and prevailing neglect of the use of our powers. For, if we would but exercise them frequently and attentively, we should easily find what must make a reasonable Being *happy*.

It

It must be cultivating *reason*; it must be SERM.
a temper and practice; like to that of him, V.
who is a perfectly moral Being: it must
consist in settled habits of real piety and
extensive virtue. Herein consists the great-
est part of our *happiness*.—— I do not say,
but that external things may be instrumen-
tal; and conduce, in some measure, to
our felicity: but we must settle and fix it
in our minds, as a certain principle, that
there is no attaining *happiness*, but by real
virtue; by doing what is right and fit;
and what we can reflect upon, with true
serenity and pleasure of mind.

And here give me leave to remark one
thing, which often arises in conversation,
when men talk of *happiness*. They fix it
just according to a person's estate. And
many apprehend that *happiness* is a loose
and vague idea, and can never be fixed.
Strange delusion! what? reasonable Be-
ings made to be *happy*; and yet not know
the ingredients of *happiness*? Cannot we
settle in our minds a true idea of *the hap-
piness of Deity*? If we cannot, we lose
the pattern of *happiness*, and of the most
complete happiness; and the very founda-
tion

SERM. tion of our hope of receiving *happiness*

V.

from him. All is turned into disorder and confusion. And yet these are the common ways of conversing. Indeed, if they mean only that some people are pleased with this, rather than that; *that* is another thing. But surely *happiness* is a settled thing. And that piety and extensive virtue are essential to it, will appear to any one who examines closely, and exercises his mind aright.

The happiness of God is a firm and solid foundation of our expecting the *happiness*, which he has promised, to his sincere and faithful servants, in the gospel of his son. If God has raised in us the expectation of an *interminable happiness*, upon condition that we sincerely desire and endeavor to attain the temper and conduct, which he prescribes, we need not in the least doubt, if we comply with the condition, but that we shall obtain the promised felicity; since he is both able and willing to confer it.

To conclude: let me recommend to you the steady pursuit of real piety and extensive

extensive virtue. This is that, which is SERM.
 necessary to your true happiness. You can- V.
 not possibly arrive to it, in any other way. ~~~~~

When a pious and virtuous man lies down, all is serene and calm. When he reviews his actions, he sees all conformed to reason and the fitness of things. He knows he is in the divine favor. He can look up to *his* God, with the highest pleasure and delight. For it is that *Deity*, who is of a perfect moral character, whom he continually endeavors to resemble. And it is that God, who, in consequence (he cannot doubt) will favor him; and will bring him to perfect and undisturbed *happiness*, in another scene of life. *This*, I say, then, and intreat you to remember it:— *This* is the true way of being *happy* here, and of attaining *perfect happiness* in the future, everlasting world.

extensive virtue. This is that which is
necessary to your happiness. You can
not possibly strive to it in any other

way.

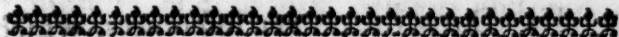
When a virtuous and virtuous man
down, all is serene and calm. When he
reviews his actions, he has all comfort
to reason and the finest of things. He
knows he is in the divine favor. He can
look up to God with the highest
pleasure and delight. For it is that God
who is of a perfect moral character, whom
he continually endeavors to resemble. And
it is that God, who in consequence (he
cannot doubt) will save him; and will
bring him to perfect and glorified hap-
piness in another moment of time. Yes, I
say, then, and instruct you to remember
it: — This is the true way of being hap-
py here, and of attaining everlasting
in the future, everlasting world.

S E R



S E R M O N VI.

The majesty, glory, and sovereignty of God.



JUDE : ver. 25.

To --- GOD --- *be glory and majesty,
dominion and power, both now
and for-ever. Amen.*



ONE of the attributes of ^{SERM.}
God, which arises from ^{VI.}
a combination of his other
perfections, is, his being
happy, in the highest and
most perfect degree ima-
ginable. This we have considered, in the
last discourse. We proceed, now, to
treat of the *attributes*, which are mentioned

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in

SERM. in the text: viz. *glory and majesty, dominion and power.*

VI.

In treating upon which, we shall

I. Endeavor to explain these attributes; and shew that they arise from a combination of the other perfections, which belong to GOD.

II. Prove, by *reason* and *revelation*, that these are to be ascribed to GOD.

III. Draw the proper inferences, which will naturally arise from each of these attributes.

I. We shall explain these *attributes* of GOD; and shew that they result from the other perfections of the *Divine Being*.

By *majesty*, we may understand “ the greatness of GOD : the supreme excellency, which belongs to him ; and by which he is exalted infinitely above all other Beings.”

That this is the result of his other perfections, will appear, at first view. For in what does the excellency of any intelligent Being consist; but in *knowledge*, and *wisdom*, and *power*, and a *perfect moral character*?

racter? Now, since these are to be attributed to God, in the highest and most perfect degree; from these, taken together, there will result the majesty, or greatness, which we must conceive to belong to him in the highest perfection.

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By *glory*, we understand “the manifestation of the excellency and *majesty* of God: and a just opinion and proper acknowledgement of the divine excellence.” This, I think, is the precise and distinct idea, which is to be fixed to the term *Glory*. That *the divine glory* results from his other perfections, is very clear; because *his glory* is no other than a manifestation of his perfections; which demands of all created intelligences, acknowledgements and praise. Therefore, we find that God is said to be *glorious in power*, and *in holiness*. And his *goodness* is called *his glory*. And, in our text, *glory* is ascribed to him, upon the account of *his wisdom*.

By *dominion and power*, we are to understand “the absolute right and authority, with which the *Divine Being* is invested,

SERM. "to and over all his creatures, as made by
 VI. "him." This right and authority doeth not
 depend on any other, nor is he account-
 able to any, for any thing which he does
 to his creatures, - consistently with his own
 perfections; and agreeable to the nature of
 that Being, over which he exercises *domi-*
nion.

This is called *summum imperium*, and is
 absolute. Whatever right or title any one
 can pretend to, with regard to any person
 or thing, *that* God hath to all things.

It is certain, that to God does belong
 all title to the government of the creatures.
 They are the effects of his *power*, and
wisdom, and *goodness*. And, if *dominion* is
 founded in perfection, or excellency; with-
 out doubt, he has the highest claim, upon
 this account.

If it be founded in *wisdom* and *goodness*,
 he has a most unalienable right to *authority*
 and *dominion*. Since all things have been
 made by him; and are every moment sus-
 tained by his *power*; since all their wants
 are supplied by him; and since his *domi-*
nion is always exercised with the highest
 skill; and with designs of the most perfect
good-

and sovereignty of God.

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goodness; we cannot but discern that, in SERM.
this point of light, he must have the high- VI.
est title to *dominion* and *authority*.

The word which, in our text, is rendered *power*, does signifie properly *authority*. And, without doubt, upon cool reflection, we may easily see, that this must be attributed, in the highest perfection, unto him who is supreme; who has all perfection; who is the great *creator* and *governor*; and in whom all Beings subsist.

To prevent the mistakes, that men are apt to run into, about *the dominion of God* over his creatures, we are not to apprehend that it consists in a right to delight himself in the extreme misery of innocent creatures.

The right, which God hath to his creatures, is founded in giving them Being; and in the benefits, which he hath conferred on them. And, therefore, God cannot, by his sovereignty, inflict, on innocent creatures, more misery, than the benefit of the Being, which he has given, amounts to. So far is God from taking pleasure in the misery of innocent creatures; that he has assured even sinners, by an oath, that he has

SERM. no pleasure in their death ; but rather that
 VI. they should turn and live.

Neither can his authority consist in imposing laws upon his creatures, which are impossible to be understood, or observed, by them. For this would be not only contrary to the dignity of the divine nature ; but it would also contradict the nature of a reasonable creature ; which cannot, in reason, be obliged, *by any power*, to impossibilities.

Nor does *the sovereignty of God* consist in decreeing, and concurring to, the sins of any ; with an intention to display his *justice*, in punishing them. For, as this would be contrary to *the perfect moral character of God* ; so also to the nature of an intelligent agent, who cannot be guilty for what it cannot help.

But *the supreme authority of God* consists in a right to deal with his creatures in any way that doth not contradict his essential perfections, and the natural condition of his creatures.

He may afflict any of his creatures for purposes of wisdom ; provided such affliction be not superior to the benefit of Being.

He

He may, if it should seem good to him, SERM.
annihilate; because what is his own he VI.
may resume.

He has a right to impose what laws he pleases, which contradict not his nature, or the condition and nature of the creature.

Lastly, He has a right to inflict due and proportionate punishment, on those that break such laws.

That this attribute of *power*, or *dominion*, does arise from a combination of other perfections, I think, must be evident. For you can never place *dominion*, in such power only, as may produce tyranny. Without doubt, where there is *wisdom* and *goodness* added to *authority*, there will be a most amiable idea of *dominion*. And whoever exercises *dominion*, in a perfect manner, must be knowing, and wise, and kind. He must, also, have *power*, proportionate to the *dominion*, that he has in his possession. And, when all these, in the highest degree, are found in *Deity*, we cannot but discern that *this dominion* does belong to him; and is the result of his perfections.

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II. I procede to prove that *these attributes* are to be ascribed to GOD. And this I shall do, 1. by *reason*. 2. by *revelation*.

1. By *reason*. — The wise heathens continually ascribed *greatness*, or *majesty*, to the *Deity*; and that chiefly as resulting from his *goodness*.

The first Being is stiled by them, *Optimus et maximus*. *The best and the greatest*. These were their most familiar titles of the *Deity*. To which I might add that known place of *Seneca*: *Primus Deorum cultus est Deos credere: dein reddere illis majestatem suam, reddere bonitatem, sine qua nulla majestas*. *The first homage due to the gods is to believe that they are; then to ascribe to them majesty; to ascribe goodness, without which there is no majesty*.

Glory stands so closely connected with *majesty*; that, the latter being proved, the former is fully and clearly evinced.

2. From the sacred writings, it is very plain that *greatness*, or *majesty*, is ascribed unto GOD. *Deut. x. 17. For the Lord, your GOD, is GOD of Gods, and Lord of Lords,*

Lords, a great GOD: One, who has supreme excellency in him, *i. e.* to whom *majesty* does belong. *Pf. xxiv. 10. Who is this king of glory? The Lord of Hosts, he is the king of glory.* You see, then, that *majesty* and *glory* (the manifestation of *majesty*) are, in express terms, ascribed to GOD. *Pf. civ. 1. Bless the Lord, O my soul. O Lord, my GOD, thou art very great; thou art cloathed with honor and majesty.—The whole earth is full of thy glory.* Hither belong the doxologies, wherein *greatness*, and *glory*, and *majesty* are ascribed to GOD.

Other texts of this nature might be produced; but those alleged may be sufficient.

As to *power*, or *dominion*:—the light of nature taught the *Heathens*, That GOD is the governor of the world. Plato calls him τῶν πάντων ἡγεμὼνα, the governor of all things. And Tully, from him, gives to Deity, the same character; *omnium rerum dominum*.

The scripture plainly attributes power to GOD. GOD is, there, described as the Lord of all; the most high GOD; the king of kings, and lord of lords: the supreme governor

SERM. governor of all Beings, in heaven and
 VI. earth: And, therefore, *the Lord of hosts*;
 that has the management, or government,
 of all the hosts above, and upon earth.

I am shorter upon this; because I think
 the truth, of this attribute's belonging to
 God, is, at first view, clear and plain.
 Only I shall cite one passage more. *Dan.*
iv. 34, 35. And at the end of the days, I,
Nebuchadnezzar, lifted up mine eyes unto
heaven; and mine understanding returned
unto me. And I blessed the most high. And
I praised and honored him, that liveth for-
ever; whose dominion is an everlasting do-
minion; and his kingdom is from genera-
tion to generation.

Having thus explained these attributes;
 and shewn that they arise from the union
 of other perfections: and, having proved,
 by reason and revelation, that they are, in
 the highest degree, to be ascribed to God;
 I shall,

III. Conclude this discourse, by making
 inferences from each of these attributes.

I. From

1st. From what has been said, we may learn, that the ground of true *majesty* and honor is real worth and excellency. SERM.
VI.

Certain it is, that we ascribe to God the highest *glory, greatness and majesty*, in as much as he possesses, in himself, underived, all perfection, in the highest degree.

It would be of great service to us to settle this in our minds; that there is no true *majesty*, or worthiness, but what springs from a real improvement of the natural and moral powers, and the having what is truly excellent.

We find, among men, a pretty general pursuit of character and dignity: but the greater part forgets whence true dignity must take its rise. If it does not spring from having what has a real excellency in it, it darkens any character, or title, that can be given. There may, indeed, be policy, in securing and guarding such as are in the highest point of life, in this world, by ascribing to them *glory and majesty*, but there can be no inward esteem, where there is wanting real excellency. The highest perfection of a reasonable nature

SERM. ture is beneficence and goodness. And

VI. whoever is placed in the highest rank, in this world, and wants beneficence and goodness; whatever else he has, it will be sullied and obscured; and will be incapable of exciting esteem in intelligent Beings. What esteem can that Being have, that has, indeed, a great deal of knowledge; but employs it in low craft, designing advantage to himself alone; tho' the effect attending it should be with mischief to us, or others? Is this what raises esteem? Can any one imagine that there can be a true foundation of esteem; where there is nothing but *power*? where *will* stands for *reason*? and passions take place, in opposition to the happiness of others? In such things it is impossible for any to attain real dignity; without having the perfections, which are becoming a reasonable nature. And we may carry this so far, as to represent, with strength, that there is no foundation of hope that we shall have the honor of being received into the glory of the future world; unless we attain a resemblance of God, in his moral perfections.

2. From

2. From the *majesty* and *glory* of GOD, SERM.
we cannot but see, that it is reasonable, VI.
that we have the highest esteem and re-
verence of him.

Since he has *majesty* and *glory*, the result of all perfections in the highest measure, he justly does require of us, that we give him the honor that is due to him. And, indeed, a reverence of GOD must, from these attributes, appear reasonable and becoming. Even the highest degree of reverence of GOD must appear highly fit and reasonable; and, of consequence, our duty.

We find, with regard to *majesty*, here on earth, that, by the external glitter and shine, it is apt to raise a sort of veneration; whether we see a just foundation for it, or not. But this we are sure of, that we can never exceed in our reverence of GOD. For in him all infinite perfections meet; which unitedly display the highest *glory* and the greatest *majesty*. And, of consequence, we are to be led by this to discern that he is to be revered and esteemed. And this esteem and reverence of the di-
vine

SERM. *vine Being* can never be carried to too great

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a degree. We should endeavor to entertain proper sentiments of him; and, in consequence, the highest veneration of him. And we are to express it, in all the ways and means, which we are capable of: and, by such external actions, as may be proper to support, in our minds and in the minds of others, a due esteem and honor; especially, by a care to be like to him. This is the highest honor that we can attain to: and that, which will put a true *glory* upon us. The more we are brought to the divine image; or to an assimilation to him, that is infinitely perfect, the more excellency we shall have, and the more true glory.

3. This plainly shews the absurdity of worshiping, in a lower degree, any Being, that he has not invested with a claim of subordinate worship.

Let us give to God, the *glory*, which belongs to him and is his due; and carefully avoid giving it to any creature. God is jealous of his honor, and will not give his glory to another, nor his praise to graven images.

Certainly,

and sovereignty of God.

III

Certainly, as we are reasonable Beings, SERM.
nothing can be proper for us in worship, VI.
but what arises from *the reason of things*,
or from *revelation*.

Without all doubt, we may, and ought to have, a due esteem for all the Beings that we know: but worship, in the highest degree, seems to be a duty that we are to practise to him alone, to whom supreme honor and majesty belong. And, if we give a disproportionate honor to any other Being; or pay any other Being religious homage, without the divine command, we are certainly criminal and guilty, in not directing our esteem aright; or in not proportioning it to the perfections of the Being, to whom it is given; or in paying an homage, that has no foundation from him, to whom the highest esteem and the greatest veneration belongs.

4. That we may worship and glorify God in a wise and becoming manner; let us attend to the manifestation of his glory.

He has opened his *glory*, in his *creation*, *providence*, and *government*. And, as we are reasonable Beings, we should attend to these

SERM. these discoveries of the *divine glory*: and,

VI. by them, be led to ascribe it to him, in the most perfect degree.

We are to *give glory* to God, in our care to act agreeably to his precepts; and suitably to the discoveries, which he has made of his will, by *reason* or *revelation*. And, when, in any instance, we have deviated from his commands; by repentance, we are to *give glory* to God; and thereby own that he has a right to govern us, by the laws that he has imparted to us: and to express, with shame, that we have acted in a manner unbecoming that relation, which we, as creatures, capable of moral government, stand in, to him.

5. Let us take care that we form right sentiments of God's being our supreme Lord and Governor.

Some have run into surprizing mistakes upon this head. They have imagined that God, as a sovereign, may do what he will with his creatures: that there is nothing inconsistent in supposing, that, upon this character, he can decree misery to his innocent creatures, beyond the value of their Being: and that he can, for the sin of another,

another, damn a great part of mankind, and make them unhappy for-ever. For he is a *sovereign*: and what proportion is there between him and us? May not he do with his creatures, as he pleases? Do we find fault with any, in our make, for killing a fly? Now, there is much greater disproportion between God and *us*, than there is between *us* and a *fly*. They, therefore, think that he may, as a *sovereign*, absolutely decree; and, in the course of his dominion, inflict, great distress and misery; and that upon the much greater part of his reasonable creatures; without any imputation upon his justice, wisdom, or goodness.

Whereas these sentiments are quite unbecoming those, who entertain clear and right ideas of *dominion*. In *dominion*, he is absolute, and he is a sovereign; but he is, also, wise, and kind, and good. He is a sovereign, that has such affection to his creatures, as to declare, even upon oath, *As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but had rather have sinners turn and live.* We must, therefore, not conceive of God, as a so-

SERM. *vereign*, just as we do of an absolute tyrannical sovereign. This is to dishonor God.

VI.

His dominion is founded upon all perfection. And, therefore, in any instance of his dominion, that appears inconsistent with any excellency, we cannot possibly suppose, or imagine, that that is a true apprehension, or idea, of *sovereignty*. He does rule as a *sovereign*; but who are they, whom he governs? The Beings, that he has made. And, if he has made any capable of being happy; and that as the effect of his goodness, there is nothing, in the idea of his *majesty, sovereignty, or dominion*, that should exclude the exercise of that beneficence, which was the spring of their being called into existence. Therefore we may very well suppose, when God has *dominion* attributed to him, that that stands to denote a *wise and kind government*. And whatever is incongruous, or inconsistent, with these perfections, cannot be taken in, or included in his *sovereignty*. And nothing can be more absurd, than to suppose a Being, that is wise and kind, just and good, should be a *sovereign*; and, under that title, act what is directly contrary

and sovereignty of God.

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contrary to wisdom and to beneficence. SERM.

That a Being, which he has created, and that is innocent, should by him be rendered unhappy, beyond the benefit of his existence, is really to represent God, in the most dark view, that possibly can be given.

VI.

We cannot conceive, that, when goodness induced him to give Being, he should make that Being worth nothing; nay, worse than nothing. For who would not prefer non-existence, to existing only as the foundation of all conceivable misery? To imagine that God, as a sovereign, should lay schemes to make the greatest part of his rational creation miserable for-ever; is to paint *Deity* in the most hideous and dreadful manner. We can never entertain such a notion of the *power*, or *dominion*, of God. He cannot tempt any; neither can he be tempted. And to imagine that this sovereign, in the exercise of his moral government, should, in an irresistible manner, operate upon some, to bring them to a temper of happiness: and to design everlasting misery to the greater number; is to describe *Deity* in the most formidable view. We cannot suppose that

SERM. he can, as *a sovereign*, act any thing inconsistent to his own perfections; or that
 VI. implies a contradiction to the powers which he has given to his creatures. He has made rational Beings and moral agents; and put in them a power of choice. Now for him to over-rule, by his irresistible power, the actions of these Beings, is to suppose that he contradicts the workmanship of his own hands; and governs in a way disagreeable to the powers, that he has imparted to them; and to the very foundation of his giving them.

6. Let us see how far a right notion of God's *sovereignty*, or *dominion*, should influence us.

We are sensible that, as *a sovereign*, he can do nothing unbecoming his own perfections; or disagreeable to the Beings, over which he exercises dominion. And, therefore, he cannot give them laws, that are, in all respects, out of their power to comply with. It is impossible. He cannot give them, in his moral government, obligations, that they neither can understand; nor can, in any circumstances, comply with. But, then, he can give us laws:
 and

and has a right to punish those that wilfully disobey them: and can give us laws, suitable to our natures, and proper to render all our powers perfect. He cannot give us laws, that we could not discern any obligation to comply with. As he is a wise Being, we cannot conceive that he will, purely to shew his arbitrary *dominion*, give such commands to any of his creatures. We, perhaps, cannot always see the reason of every thing, that has the stamp of the divine authority: tho' I will venture to say, that the reason of every thing appears

SERM.

VI.

- very clear, in all the parts of any *revelation*, which God has given us.

It is no matter, indeed, to say, whether the commemorating of the death of Christ, by bread and wine, might have been done by some other things, or in some other way. Certain it is, that the commemorating the death of Christ is of a *moral obligation*, upon a supposition of the truth of the facts, that he came into the world, and died, rose again, and ascended; and designed, by all the parts of his mediation, to bring us to the image of God, and render us eternally happy. To commemorate

SERM. such a benefactor, surely, is founded upon

VI. the highest reason: but to remember him,
 by taking bread and wine, we could not
 have known to have been our duty, but by
 an express injunction. However; it is
 highly fit that we should submit to it, when
 we see it has the characters of the divine
 authority.

I am, disposed to think, indeed, that
 there is no arbitrary command from *Deity*;
 but that there is always a reason for every
 thing which he commands. And, tho'
 every one of his creatures may not, possibly
 see it, in all lights; yet they may see, as
 they are in an imbodyed state, they need
 some things, which are sensible, to ingage
 their attention,, and assist their memory.
 And it is the excellency of the Christian
 religion, that it is attended with so few
 things, which are, in their own nature,
 positive. Tho' they are not good in them-
 selves; but good, because commanded;
 yet God does not command without rea-
 son. And all the commands, that are of
 a positive nature, must be viewed by us,
 as means, to bring us to that which is
 moral.

The

The ultimate design of all is to raise us SERM.
to a resemblance of God, in his perfect VI.
moral character. Therefore, God has a
right to give us commands; if they are not
such as are, in all points of view, out of our
power. To command me to touch the
stars with my hand, would be unworthy of
God; because it is impossible, in the na-
ture of things, that I should do so. God
commands us all that tends to our happi-
ness; and what is in our power, in some
circumstances or other, to perform. It is
true, we may be called to do things that
may be difficult: but, then, we are certain,
that God, who is of a perfect moral charac-
ter, will give proportionable aid, in the course
of his government, to those that are sincere
in the pursuit of holiness. To imagine
that he denies what is necessary to any, is
really lessening his character, as the Father
of all mankind. He never denies what is
necessary to any. He lays no train to di-
rect his creatures into the practice of that
which his soul hateth; nor ever intended
to make any unhappy, unless their own
choice and conduct rendered them inca-
pable subjects of being happy.

SERM. 7. It will follow, from God's having
 VI. this dominion, that we ought to be patient
 and submissive to his will, whenever he
 thinks fit to afflict us.

And, when we know that he designs, by all these trials, to refine us, and to make us more meet for being for-ever happy; surely, there is no duty more rational, than that a creature, which is reasonable, should acquiesce in the disposals of the great governor of the world; who is perfectly wise; whose goodness is unlimited; and whose conduct (we are sure) is agreeable to the highest perfection.

Let us, therefore, submit, without murmuring, to what he shall inflict upon us; accept the punishment of our iniquity, and patiently bear the indignation of the Lord; because we have sinned against him, who is our rightful Sovereign and Lord.

8. *Lastly*, From this character of God, we may infer, that it becomes us to render him all imaginable duty and obedience.

Nothing can be more absurd than to disobey the laws of our creator, and supreme Lord and Governor.

If

If we would but coolly reflect, we should find that there is, in this, not only disloyalty; but base ingratitude. What!

SERM.

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- offend God? whose goodness was the spring of our Being; and from whose bounty, we, every moment, receive numberless favors? Shall I offend him, who has, I know, a sincere desire to render me happy here; and perfectly happy in a future life? Shall I go and stab myself? destroy my own felicity? and, by disobeying his just and righteous commands, offend the kind creator and governor of the world:
- who intended (if I would but comply with his will) my happiness, here; and my complete felicity, in another world.

Let us, by all means, take care to behave, in a manner suitable to the acknowledgement of the dominion and supremacy of God. He has a right over us: and we know that he will not govern in a capricious and unkind manner. We are certain that his dominion is founded upon perfection; and particularly upon goodness, which is the most amiable perfection; and in which, *Deity* is represented as delighting himself.

Let

SERM. Let us, with the highest pleasure, run

VI. the path of the divine commandments;
and therein continue stedfast, and perse-
vere unto the end: that we may, at last,
receive from God, to whom *power* be-
longs, a crown of righteousness, and an
eternal weight of glory.



S E R-



S E R M O N VII.

God, the creator of all things.



R O M. xi. 36.

Of whom— are all things.



I N discoursing on *the attributes* of God, we have proposed those several heads, on which we have endeavored to treat.

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VII.

We have divided *the attributes*: not that we are to conceive that they are, in God, so distinguished; but to help our conception of him. For the idea of God is, that of one, simple, all-perfect mind.

The weakness of our powers render it necessary that we conceive of *the attributes* of God, in a distinct manner. Now the order,

SERM. order, in which we have ranged them, is,
 VII. as follows,

I. We have treated upon the *perfections* of God, that arise from the character, which he bears, of a pure and an immaterial spirit.

II. We have considered those *perfections*, or attributes, which arise from the manner of his existence, namely, *by absolute necessity*.

III. We have considered those attributes, which arise from a combination of his other perfections; such as his *happiness, majesty, glory, and dominion, or authority*. — Thus far we have gone.

IV. We come, now, to the last class, into which we divided *the attributes of God*. And that is, such as arise from the relation of God to other Beings.

It is certain, indeed, that there is no excellency, or attribute, of God; but may be considered with relation to other things. *For instance*, We cannot attain a right idea of his *knowledge*, without considering

dering that it extends to all things possible, SERM.
or actual: and, in this, there is implied a VII.
plain relation. But the attributes, which
I intend to discourse upon, may be called
by way of eminence, *relative*. And they
are such as follow.

1. That he is the original cause, or *creator* of all Beings.

2. That he is the *preserver, proprietor,*
and *director* of all.

3. That, with regard to intelligent Beings, and moral agents, he is their *governor*. And that he will, in consequence,

4. Be their *judge*. Or, in other words, that he will reward and punish, in a manner consistent with perfect wisdom, justice, and goodness, those moral agents, who either comply with his laws, or violate them.

We shall treat upon *these attributes*, in order.

The words of our text, [*Of whom — are all things,*] will give us a just foundation, for treating upon the first of these *attributes of God, viz.* that he is the *creator*, or first cause, of all Beings.

There

SERM. There is nothing, that hath imployed
 VII. curious and inquisitive persons, in all ages,
 more, than to account for the origin of
 things.

Some, indeed, little regard their intelligent powers. They are governed by sense, appetite, and passion; just as external objects make an impression: and are not at all careful to improve the higher powers, that God has indued them with, in the contemplation of objects that are truly worthy. I cannot but think that these are the most contemptible persons in the world; who let their minds dwindle, and contract rust; and never look beyond what is pleasing to the senses; or how to make a shining figure among their fellow-creatures.

It is, however, certain that all the great geniuses, in every age, have thought proper to inquire into the origin of things. Some have surprizingly blundered. Others have attained a pretty clear notion, tho' mixed with some mistakes. I shall, in treating on this subject, take in all the aids which I can possibly have, from *reason*; from the testimony of those great men,
 that

that have lived in former ages; and from what the *scripture* relates, concerning this important subject.

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I shall not here inquire into the reason of their attempts. However; there have been some, who have industriously endeavored to account for the universe and the various appearances in it, with a design to exclude an intelligent Being: but their attempts have been altogether without success.

Some have supposed that the world arose from *chance*. A very surprizing account, indeed! Though, in infinite duration, there may be infinite *chances*, yet it does not appear at all probable that there should spring, from thence, a most admirable, wise, and beauteous frame. *Tully* reflects upon this, with his usual skill, and says, "If this be true; how comes it, that, "from scattering letters at random, there "does not spring up a book of the deepest "thought, and the finest sentiments? Or, "when we throw colours upon canvass, "why does there not arise a fine and beautiful picture? These things are much "more likely; than that the world, which "carries

SERM. "carries in it such traces of wisdom,

VII. "should take its rise from chance."

I think this opinion is now discarded by every one: and, therefore, they have fled to another method, and tell us, that the existence of this world is the effect of *necessity*.

This is as astonishing as the other. For what does *necessity* mean? If it has any idea, it must only amount to this; "that things are, because they are." No one could assert this with a grave face; notwithstanding they still allege this, to account for the form and structure of this world.

Lucretius, without asking leave, supposes an infinite number of atoms, and infinite space, and motion. But it is inconsistent to reason and philosophy, to take any thing for granted, without sufficient evidence. Let us, therefore, inquire into the ground of the existence of these numberless atoms, which are small and distinct; each taking up its proportion of infinite space. If they are not produced, but eternal (as they are represented to be) then they must

must exist by absolute necessity: by which is understood that they exist in such a manner, as that their non-existence is impossible, and implies a contradiction.

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Again; there must be granted a *vacuum*, or there could not be any motion.—

- That there is a *vacuum*, Sir Isaac Newton has clearly proved. [*Vid. Princip. Mathem. p. 402. Cor. 4. 3. edit.*] Now what exists by absolute necessity, exists every where alike. And, if there be any space, in which these atoms do not exist (as must be the case, if there be a *vacuum*) it is far from being a contradiction to suppose that they might not exist at all.

They add, to their infinite atoms, *motion*: but for what reason, I cannot imagine. Since some portions of matter are at rest; and would for-ever remain so, without some mover to put them out of that state. *Motion* is not essential to matter. For, then, every particle of matter must be in motion; which is contrary to fact: Or else it must want what is essential to itself; which is absurd. There is therefore, something, that must begin *motion*

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SERM. in matter. For matter is of itself sluggish
VII. and inactive.

But, if we should allow to their atoms, *motion*; in infinite space, from what point soever they set out, they would move on eternally and infinitely, in a strait line. For that is the first law of motion. And, then, all these atoms, moving in a direct line, can never be conceived to enter, or fall, into such a combination, as is proper to form such a beautiful world, as this. To introduce *chance*, is to say that the world is made by no cause at all: the absurdity of which would plainly appear, if it were applied to the rise of a stately and magnificent palace; or to the composure of a book, made up of a long and connected train of close reasoning.

I would farther add, that, if we should allow his atoms a declination; yet whence should arise consciousness, or thought? There is no connection between thought, and matter and motion; neither can it arise from thence. Refine matter as you will; yet still it is divisible and extended: and there will no other property arise, than what attends more gross bodies. Let it
move

move in what direction you will ; a con-
 scious or intelligent Being could never
 spring up. Yet this must be, if all the
 appearances in the universe are the result of
 only *atoms, motion, and space.*

Some have been so very desirous of establishing this way of accounting for the formation of the world, that they have said, " that motion is essential to matter, and " that there is no matter without motion ; " *i.e. without an attempt to move.*" This must be the meaning. For otherwise, it is contrary to experience.

- Well, admit that there is such an attempt, in all matter, to move: it is, to be sure, either in one determination ; or with regard to every determination, that it is capable of. If it be an attempt to move every way at once ; the consequence will be rest, and no motion at all. If the determination is one way ; then it is very evident and plain, that there must be some reason assigned, why it has such a direction, or determination. It is, therefore, a very plain absurdity, that there should be motion essential to all matter ; tho' some matter, we see, is at rest. *i.e.* Motion is

SERM. essential to matter ; and yet some matter is

VII. without motion. And there is no way,
 that they can think of, by which they
 can fairly account for the formation of this
 world. For, if we allow many things,
 which they assert without sufficient grounds,
 yet who can account for *gravitation* ?
 That one body, moving upon the surface
 of another, should, in proportion to the
 celerity of its movement, impel that other
 body, is easy to account for. But how
 shall we account for this, that every body
 gravitates to another, just in proportion to
 its solid contents?

That way, therefore, of accounting for
 the formation of the world, by the mo-
 tion of atoms in infinite space, can by no
 means be allowed as reasonable and well-
 grounded.

Let us, then, procede to consider other
 methods, that are taken, to account for
 the origin of the world.

Others, who are far the greater number,
 take in *us a mind*, or *intelligent Being*, in
 accounting for the order and beauty of our
 system. But, then, by mistaking the true
 notion of *creation*, which is *giving Being*
where

where there was none before; and apprehending that it is making something out of nothing, which they suppose to be absurd and impossible; they have imagined that the matter of the world, tho' not the order in which it now appears, was eternal. And here again they divide.

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Some have apprehended that the matter of the world was an eternal and necessary emanation from GOD; as light and heat is from the sun. This seems to have been the opinion of Aristotle.

- Now this appears to be inconsistent to clear and right ideas. There must be an eternal Being, the ratio of whose existence is absolute necessity: but, upon the supposition, just now mentioned, matter, as well as that mind, whose emanation it is, must be conceived to exist by absolute necessity. And, then, there will be two distinct Beings existing by absolute necessity. Whereas we have already proved, that the Being, which exists by absolute necessity, must be only one.

Nor can we ever account for it how there should be an emanation eternal and independent. For so it must be, if it de-

SERM. depends not upon the will of the first, necessary eternal, and self-existent Being. This

VII.

would be to imagine that all this world is necessary and independent: which is as absurd a sentiment, as can well be received. Matter cannot be independent; nor can it be necessarily-existent. The reason is evident; because it is capable of being bounded; it is figurable; it may be in motion; or it may be at rest. And the idea of an independent Being, which exists *by absolute necessity*, is, that he is the same, simple Being, existing without any change; eternally and immensely. Now, since matter is bounded and limited; and exists here only, and not there; it may not exist at all: and, of consequence, it cannot have existence *by absolute necessity*. If it is variable, as we may see, from the observations we make of the Beings around us, that it certainly is:— I say, if it be mutable, it may exist in this form, or in another; and it is no way inconsistent to suppose its existence away. Now, this is directly contrary to existence *by absolute necessity*.

Again;

Again; if the matter of the world exists necessarily, it must exist always and every where, immutably the same. And then, how could the necessarily-existing mind form out of it a beautiful and orderly structure, which unavoidably involves in it mutation and change? And, if any should imagine that not only the matter of the world, but the beautiful order of it is necessary: then it would follow that there could not be any Being added to what now exists, or any taken away and removed; nor any the least change in the order and relation that one thing has to another: — which, I think, no one will venture to assert.

From all these arguments, it will follow that we cannot conceive of the world as a necessary emanation from Deity. Because that would be to suppose that it exists independently, and by absolute necessity; contrary to the known character of matter, and to the very reason of things. There cannot be any more than one Being, that exists in such a way.

Plato and his followers say, “That the world, is, indeed, eternal; but, then,

SERM. " they conceive it to have been produced

VII. " by the intervention of the will of the

“ first, independent, necessarily-existing
 “ mind. God must be conceived to be
 “ an eternally powerful agent: and there-
 “ fore, there can be no point of infinite
 “ duration assignable, in which he cannot
 “ produce effects, by the determination of
 “ his will. And yet we cannot but con-
 “ ceive the cause to be prior to the ef-
 “ fect.”

This account, which *Plato* gives, of the universe, as the production of the divine will, is equivalent to what we call *creation*. It appears, also, to be most reasonable; and to make the foundation of religious and moral obligations firm and solid.

But, tho' an eternally-powerful Being could always have produced other Beings, and an effect might be co-equal in duration with the cause: yet it does not thence follow that this world was created from eternity.

It is true, that all this world, the whole universe, was framed by the first, independent, self-existent, and necessarily-existent mind, to whom we give the name

of

of God. But, when the universe was made by him; or any part of it; could not be known to us, but by *revelation*. We could not possibly have fixed the date, or *æra*, of the birth of the universe; or of any part of it; unless the creator had thought proper to have made it known to us by *revelation*. And, therefore, let us see how *revelation* has manifested this.

The account, which we have of the creation, by *Moses*, is not an account of the creation of the whole universe. It is a great mistake to think that *Moses* intended, in the first chapter of *Genesis*, to open the creation of the whole world. It is true, that this may seem to be implied in the first verse. *In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.* But the word [*Heavens*] is used to signify *this expansion*. Therefore *Moses*, in that very chapter, speaks of *the fowls of heaven*.

It appears to me probable, that *Moses* gives us an account of the creation of our planet, or our earth, only: which was created in six days.

I know very well that here will be an objection raised, from what the writer says, concern-

SERM. concerning GOD's making *the sun and*
 VII. *moon*, on the fourth day. To which I
 would answer, that GOD is not said there
 to have created the sun and the moon;
 but to have made two luminaries; which,
 in other words, denotes, that, on the fourth
 day, the sun and moon appeared, and gave
 light to the earth.

It is farther to be observed, that the account, which *Moses* gives, of the creation of the earth, and all things that are therein; and of the heavens, so far as related to this orb, was sufficient to answer his design and end: which was to shew the folly of *idolatry*. *Moses* was sent of GOD, to settle a constitution, that was calculated to prevent, or cure, *idolatry*. And, therefore, *Eusebius* remarks the beauty, that appears, in *Moses's* beginning his history, with an account of GOD's *creating the heavens and the earth*. For thereby he destroys all foundation for *idolatry*.

Give me leave to observe farther, that *Moses* does not say, that this part of the universe was made out of nothing. It seems, indeed, a little surprizing to any thoughtful person, that GOD should first make a
 chaos:

chaos: and then, out of that chaos, form SERM.
a beautiful world: when he could VII.
have formed it as well, at first, without a
rude and undigested mass; out of which
to raise such a beautiful structure.

There is one place in scripture, that seems
to run counter to this opinion, of God's
making this world out of a chaos: viz. Heb.
xi. 3. Through faith we understand, that
the worlds were framed by the word of God:
so that things, which are seen, were not
made of things, which do appear. But
whoever wrests this text to prove, that *Mo-*
ses gives an account of the creation of our
orb, out of nothing, falls into a very great
mistake. For the apostle refers to *Genesis,*
i. 2. And the earth was without form and
void. The *Septuagint* makes use of a word
which signifies, *that which is not brought*
into a distinct view, as an object visible to
the sight. When, therefore, this is cited
by the apostle, his meaning is, "that this
" beautiful structure was made out of
" things, which were rude and indigested;
" and that rendered nothing distinct, or
" beautiful, to the eye."

What

SERM. What this chaos was, whether it was
 VII. formerly an habitable globe, destroyed by
 the creator and governor of the universe;
 or what else, is hard to determine.

Concerning the interpretation of *Moses's* account of the creation of this earth, give me leave to observe one error, which a great man has run into: viz. that, when *Moses* says, God created this world in six days, he supposes a day to stand for a year. And this he does, it seems, because he cannot so easily adjust the effects of one day, with the operations of another. However; nothing is more evident to me, than that this interpretation is wild and ungrounded. For, if a day stands for a year, let us see how the account will come out. *And GOD said, "Let there be light," And there was light. And GOD saw the light that it was good: And GOD divided the light from the darkness. And GOD called the light DAY; and the darkness he called NIGHT. And the evening and the morning was the first day: i. e. the first year.* So that here is, in this hypothesis, half a year darkness, and half a year light. And how this will agree with the productions of the other days,

days, I leave to confiderate men to deter- mine. SERM. VII.

Besides, GOD is said to have rested upon the seventh day, and to have hallowed it. And he ordered *Adam* and *Eve* to sanctifie it. According to this hypothesis, therefore, they were to keep the sabbath, for a whole year together: but, for six years, after that, to keep no sabbath at all. For, if a day, in one place, is put for a year; it must stand so, all thro' the account. Moreover, I think, the reason, which he gives for this, is wrong. He says, "that a day, in scripture, is used for a year." So it is, in the prophetic language. But what has that to do with a plain narration, of creating the world in six days.

Again: it may be inquired, "Why did God create the world in six days? Could he not have finished it in a moment; in the same order and beauty, in which it now appears?"

The answer to this, is, I think, clear and easy. It is represented to have been made *by a word*; but out of a *chaos*, as that, from whence each day's operation took its rise: so that GOD could have created

SERM. ated this beautiful frame of things, with
 VII. the greatest ease, in one single moment.

But, in forming it in six days, he has con-
 descended to the weakness of our under-
 standings. When we contemplate things,
 that are done at different periods, it is easy
 for the mind to trace them with greater
 distinctness. And one can see their propor-
 tion, order, and beauty, with greater ease
 and exactness.

If it be inquired, “ When was this part
 “ of the universe formed of God ; accord-
 “ ing to the relation that *Moses* gives us ? ”
 Why ; it was created about five or six thou-
 sand years ago.

But then, here it will be asked again :
 “ Have we not an account of the *Chinese*,
 “ and of the *Chaldeans* and *Egyptians*,
 “ which runs much farther back, than the
 “ account, that *Moses* has given us ? ”

Answer. So I acknowledge their histo-
 rians say : but this one thing I must re-
 mark, that their earliest accounts are filled
 up with mere fables. And, when they
 come to historical facts, they appear, from
 some circumstances, to have been first de-
 livered by *Moses* : and, from thence, by
 broken traditions, to have derived down to
 them. And

And we have all imaginable reason to SERM. believe that this world was made, about VII. the time, in which *Moses* fixes it. For

we have other testimonies: we have a division of time into weeks, or seven days; which appears to take its rise, in all probability, from God's separating the seventh day for his service. We have as much evidence, as the nature of the thing will bear. If we trace the beginning of arts and sciences, we shall find that we shall be obliged to stop, before the time, or period, which *Moses* fixes for the creation. And,

- yet, if it had been existing, many thousand years before, we cannot imagine how finding out necessary things should be so late.

It is not four thousand years ago that any other history began. And no other history ever could be found to run farther back, than *Moses*.

If it be said, "that arts may, thro' various revolutions, be lost." It may be answered; Could necessary arts be lost? Could ploughing, or sowing, or what stands connected with the support of human life, be lost? No, certainly.

You see, then, that it appears, from the modern date of history and of inventions, that

SERM. that this world could not begin more early
 VII. than *Moses* represents. Or, at least, it is
 not probable that this earth is of a more
 antient date.

If we could calculate the increase of mankind, I believe it would be a demonstrable proof, that the world could not be eternal. Nay, I am apt to think, that this, carefully pursued, would make it appear, that the world, in all probability, must be of the date that *Moses* has settled.

However; these arguments being so much out of the common way, I shall say no more of them; but only remark, that we have, by *revelation*, a plain account, that the first Being, which exists by *absolute necessity*, did not form the world immediately by himself. *Through faith, we understand that the worlds were framed by the word (or son) of GOD.* He, who was, when he appeared here on earth, stiled the *son of GOD*, was the immediate agent. There is nothing that is more clearly asserted than this. *Heb. i. 1, 2. GOD——bath, in these last days, spoken unto us by his son;——by whom also he made the worlds.* This is one proof of GOD's making

ing all things by his son : unless we take SERM.
VII.
the word, translated [*worlds*,] to stand for
ages. Col. i. 16. *For by him were all things
created; [i. e. by Christ, the logos, the
word, which afterwards became flesh, and
was incarnate: By him were all things
created;] that are in heaven, and that are
on earth; visible and invisible: whether they
be thrones, or dominions, or principalities,
or powers. All things were created by him,
and for him. And he is before all things,
and by him all things consist.*

Thus have I represented to you the account, which *Moses* and the other sacred writers have given of the creation of the world. Only, lest I should be misunderstood, I would observe, that, (tho' *Moses*, in the first chapter of *Genesis*, gives an account of the formation of this earth only, with the things upon it: yet,) when the sacred writers were, by their *reason*, and by *revelation*, led to the full extent of creation; they say, *All things* were created of God: *i. e.* spirits, or conscious Beings; as well as the material world:— the heavens and the earth, and all that is therein.

SERM. And here, in our text, it is said, concerning
 VII. God, as universal creator; — Of
whom are all things. So that it is the doctrine of *revelation* (tho' *Moses* gives us an account of the formation of our world only; and many passages of the sacred writings may be so applied: yet it is laid down, in several other places, in much greater extent) that God *made all things*: that he formed conscious Beings, and gave them agency; and *that he made the worlds by his son.*

Give me leave to draw some inferences; and so conclude.

1. Since God, the one, necessarily-existing mind, is the producer, or creator, of all things: it is evident that *polytheism* and *idolatry* are intirely unreasonable and groundless.

Paying divine honors to any, but the one true God, that all-perfect mind, by whom all orders of Beings, visible and invisible, were created and made, is robbing God of the glory, which is due to him alone.

If we pay divine honors to any other Being; it cannot but make us criminal. It is a conduct unbecoming the dignity of
 our

our reasonable frame. The benefactions, SERM.
which we receive from any produced Be- VII.
ing, are not sufficient to lay a solid foundation for such a behavior: since hereby the mind is taken off, in a considerable degree, from attending to God, who is the source of all Being; and the original of every blessing.

If we pay inferior, or mediatorial, homage to any other Being: let us see what foundation we have for so doing. If we were commanded to pay supreme honors to any Being that is produced, or created, we could not be secure of the divine original of such an injunction. [See *Rom.* i. 20—23.] But, if he has commanded us to pay mediatorial worship to any Being; then, we are to give the worship to that Being, which God has appointed.

This was not the case of the antient idolaters. They, of their own heads, worshiped many Gods. And, tho' they might seem to own one supreme God; yet they worshiped him, by other mediums than what abstract reason would have recommended; and for which they had no foundation in any discovery, or revelation, that God had made of his will, to them.

SERM. 2. If GOD created all things; and all

VII. things were made by his will; then we
 are particularly engaged to offer to him
 our continual tribute of praise and thankf-
 giving. We are most gratefully to ac-
 knowlege the good that he has communi-
 cated to us, in giving us Being; and creat-
 ing so many creatures around us, which
 minister to our welfare.

As these are all the effects of his will,
 it is absolutely absurd to suppose *that the
 goodness of GOD is not free*. For, then,
 there would be no foundation of praising
 him, for the works of creation; any more
 than there is to bless GOD, that he exists
 by absolute necessity; that he is a Being of
 power; or that he is immense, or eternal.
 But, when we know, that it is from him,
 that we are formed; and placed in the
 rank, in which we are: then, we have
 sufficient grounds to express our highest
 acknowledgements, of praise and thankf-
 giving, unto him.

Every power of injoyment, that we are
 indued with; and every degree of influ-
 ence, which any Beings, around us, have,
 upon our pleasure, or happiness, derive
 that

that from the creator, or producer, of the universe. He is the source of every blessing: and therefore, by every good, that we enjoy, we should be led to acknowledge the divine favor, and to express our highest gratitude and thankfulness to him. SERM.
VII.

3. As God is the universal creator, he is the proprietor and owner of all things. He has a rightful dominion over them; and can dispose of them as he pleases.

They are his; for he produced them: *and, for his pleasure they are* [or now exist] *and were* [originally] *created.* We should, • by frequent meditation, imprint upon our minds a deep sense of these *attributes of* God. If he is the proprietor of us, then we are not our own: and we should carefully study, and practise, what may render us acceptable to him.

4. If he is the creator of all, and has a right to govern us, then it is our duty to understand his will; with an intent to practise agreeable to what he enjoins by *reason and revelation.*

This lays a firm foundation of religious and moral obligations. If God is our creator, and the maker of all other Beings;

SERM. and we have powers from him, whereby

VII. we are capable of contemplating his excellencies, as they shine forth in the works, which he has made; and to adore, esteem, worship, imitate, and obey him;—capacity infers obligation; and we are certainly bound to act becomingly to the faculties which we have received from him, and to the perfections which we cannot but apprehend to belong to him.

5. From hence it follows that we are always obliged to express *humility* in our temper and behavior.

There is nothing more unbecoming a creature, who has received all the excellencies, which he possesses, from God, than a proud and insolent deportment.

6. *Lastly*, We may infer how great an absurdity there is, in not having our minds brought to a rational submission and resignation to the divine will, in every circumstance, in which he thinks proper, in the course of his providence, to place us.

There is something exceeding wrong in impatience, and fretting at God. It is by him, we live, and have every favor. Has he taken any thing from you, but what was

was his own? Was it not his property? SERM.
VII.
Would you not be displeased with any, that should be angry, when you take away what you had a title to? When you consider such behavior in another, you cannot but see this in the strongest light imaginable. We ourselves are the effects of his goodness. It is not by our own power, that we are preserved: it is by his kind care and providence. And, if he brings us into any trouble; like a kind father, he thereby designs our good. And shall we, in consequence, behave unbecoming his children? Creatures, that are every moment living upon his bounty? who have nothing that we can call *good*, but what we have received from his gracious hands?

If every blessing, which we enjoy, takes its rise from him, we should chearfully resign, and submit to his will; when any thing (how dear soever it may be to us) is removed, or taken away from us. He only resumes his own: and we should take care that we behave decently, and as becomes creatures, who believe that all things are of him; and consequently that he is the proprietor and disposer of them all.

SERM. This should make us contented with the
 VII. rank we hold in the scale of Beings, which
 he has made; render us easy with our station in the world; and fully satisfied with the circumstances, in which he has placed us. The infinitely wise, powerful, and good Being is the creator, and disposer of all things.

To conclude: Let us, by a frequent and serious contemplation on the creation of the world, see that all the things around us are from God: and that we ought, by these, to be led up to a firm belief of his Being and perfection: and to infer, that he, that terminates in these things, and looks no higher, acts in a most degenerate and groveling manner; vastly below creatures that have such lively hopes and raised powers, as we have. And let us not imagine, that we cannot make ourselves criminal, by neglecting our powers.

Persons are ready to say, "that they are placed in a world of action: and that the affairs of this life fill up all their time. They cannot, therefore, improve their understandings."

All

All this, I am afraid, arises from the SERM.
 difficulty, which attends the first attempt VII.
 to raise and improve the mind. Can you
 make any just excuse for not using your
 powers? for not contemplating the per-
 fections, that are to be attributed to God;
 and which are rendered conspicuous in all
 the universe? Pray: what are you doing,
 all this while? attending to dress, food,
 company? suiting the situation of an
 house, or garden? minding trade or busi-
 ness? getting money, or a large estate?
 studying grand appearances, or the gay
 • amusements of this world? *These*, (you say)
ingross your minds. And do they really so?
 Is this becoming a *reasonable Being*, form-
 ed for immortality? I will allow you, that
 all these may have some place in your de-
 signs and pursuits. I am not designing to
 take you intirely off from action. But
 why must the body ingross all your care
 and attention? Why must your minds lie
 neglected? and appear quite empty? and
 have no objects to entertain them? Surely,
 there is nothing more irrational, nor at-
 tended with worse consequences. We
 must remember, that our happiness must
 be

SERM. be the happiness of *reasonable Beings*. If

VII. you have no thought of any thing but the happiness of a brute, you are doing something that is intolerable. But, when you know yourselves to be rational Beings, allied to God and to another world; and yet live, as if this scene would be the last, and no other to succede, it is acting quite beneath the dignity of your make: and it is an affront to the goodness of God, the creator of all things, that has placed you in this rank of creatures, and in this part of his creation; with a view to exalt you, hereafter, to an higher rank; and to a more glorious part of his creation.

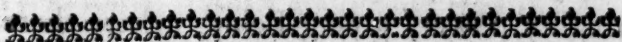


S E R-



S E R M O N VIII.

God, the preserver of all.



R o m. xi. 36.

• --- *Through him* --- are all things.



H E fourth division of the S E R M. attributes of God, is, of V I I I. such as are *eminently relative*: *Eminently*, I say; because other attributes may be considered, as relating to objects. Now those, which I call *attributes*, that are, by way of eminence, *relative*, are, *that God is the first cause, or creator, of all things*: and that he is, also, their *preserver, governor, and judge*.

The

SERM. The first of these *attributes*, we have
VIII. distinctly considered.

~~~~~ I now procede to the second, *viz.* his being *the preserver of all* the Beings, that he has made. For the apostle does, with great justness, say, relating to GOD, "That  
" of him are all things; and *all things*  
" *through him.*"

We have, in the idea of *creation*, almighty power, giving Being, where there was none before. When Being is imparted, it is requisite that he, who was the first cause, should continue and *preserve* what he has made. It is impossible to apprehend that any Being, created of GOD, should be independent upon him. Such an idea is inconsistent with his character, as the original, and first cause, of all things.

~~~~~ Having proved that the eternal, necessarily-existing mind, by his will, produced, or created, the world, with all its furniture, it will now be proper to inquire,  
" Whether he leaves it to subsist of itself,
" without any farther concern about it?
" Or, whether the conservation of it, in
" that order, in which it was framed, is
" not the result of his constant and immediate
" diate

"diate influence and operation? Or, at SERM.
 "least, effected by laws, which he had VIII.
 "fixed and settled, in its first produc-
 "tion?"

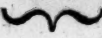
Whether, in the *preservation* of the Beings, that he has made, there is the same power exerted, as was in their first creation, is what has occasioned a difficulty to some. But I apprehend that the dependence of all created Beings, upon God, is such, that they are, every moment, preserved in Being, by him, who is the first original of all. This, I think, is favored by *reason*, and by *scripture*.

Reason tells us that, since the substances, as well as the properties, of all Beings, take their rise from God; Properties, that cannot exist without a subject (as well as the substance, or essence, of things) must be preserved by him, who created all things.

The scripture, also, appears to favor this: because God is there said to *preserve all things*: and it is further declared, that, *in him, we live, and move, and have our Being*: i. e. our continual existence. And nothing can be objected against this sentiment, from our being free, or moral agents.

For,

SERM. For, as he has made us and indued us with

VIII.  this character, he supports our powers and capacities, every moment. By which, we become capable of action. And so, with propriety, we may be said to have the continuance of our Being from him.

To imagine that GOD has no concern about the works of his hands; when we find that he has put, into some of his creatures, a tender regard to their offspring; is altogether improbable. Besides; such a desertion and neglect of the Beings, which he has made, upon a careful examination, will be found inconsistent with the true idea, which we are to form of him. He is, as a pure spirit, perfect life and activity; every where present, all-powerful, wise and good, proprietor and possessor of all Beings. And is it consistent with one of such a character not to interest himself in preserving, directing, and governing his own world? And, since nothing is beneath his creation, nothing can be supposed below his care.

Farther: Since he is the one, independent Being, it seems incongruous to suppose, that he should make any Being, which

which shall not, every moment, be dependent upon him. From whence it clearly follows, that God is *the preserver*, as well as *the creator*, of the universe; and that he does concern himself about it.

SERM.
VIII.

“ But might not God, when he produced the world, settle such laws as should *preserve* it, in the same beautiful order, in which it was, at first, formed; without his immediately influencing it every moment? Do we not think it an higher instance of skill, to make a machine, that will go a considerable time, without the continual operation of the artist upon it, than that he should, every moment, influence its movements? This appears to be confirmed by the expressions, [*The laws of motion, the law of gravitation, or attraction;*] which are made use of, by persons the most skilled in explaining the appearances of nature.”

This requires a careful examination. — But, before I enter upon it, it will be proper to premise, that this scheme of thinking has been received, by different persons, with very different views. Some intend,
by

SERM. by such representations, to overturn a particular providence; and to persuade persons to believe that God does not concern himself in the government of the world; and so regards not the actions of men. This, undoubtedly, favors *atheism and irreligion*.

Others have no such design, but a quite contrary view. They imagine, that this gives us a more honorable notion of God, than to suppose that he immediately and constantly actuates every thing in this system: which, in their opinion, is attended with many difficulties. This hypothesis, they conceive, secures *the providence and government of God*, as well as the other. Since these laws (by which the world is continued in the beautiful order, in which it was first created) were settled and constituted by him. And, to infer, from this scheme, that God regards not the actions of men, is to draw a conclusion which does not fairly arise from it: and is inconsistent with the idea of God, as every-where present, omniscient, and a moral governor.

Granting,

Granting, then, that there is no bad SERM.
consequence arising from this hypothesis; VII.

it cannot be thought improper to look a little nearly into it; and carefully examine, "Whether, upon true principles of philosophy, it may be admitted?"

1. Matter cannot begin motion. That must take its rise from God, the first, all-perfect, independent mind. Neither can it continue, of itself, in all the numberless directions of motion, which are necessary to conserve the universe, with all the furniture thereof. This must be, by the will, which first produced them: that is, immediately by the divine Being.

Matter is not capable of acting; but must always be acted upon. And God conserves every Being in the universe; and governs it in a manner agreeable to the nature which he gave it: of beings suited to Beings, which are intelligent, and active; and under moral government, are continually supported in their powers; and have freedom and power of acting; or they could not be capable of virtue or vice, reward or punishment: or, in other words,

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SERM. would not be what God constituted them
 VIII. to be, in his creation.

On the contrary: *Matter* is inanimate. And, supposing it at rest, it can never begin to move, unless it is put into motion, by some Being, that is immaterial and intelligent. If we see a parcel of matter put in motion; and that moves another body, by impulse; still we must trace it to the first original of motion. And, I think, it appears clear that the first motion cannot spring from matter, considered as at rest. And therefore, from matter's being inanimate, sluggish, and inactive, and never altering its state; it must have its first motion from an intelligent Being. When we talk of *the laws of matter and motion*, strictly speaking, we talk not consistently. There being no law, properly speaking, capable of being applied to *matter*. To suppose that God put into it laws, by which it should steadily act, in an infinite variety of directions, when he made it inert, and merely to be acted upon, seems inconsistent and absurd. *Matter*, therefore, seems incapable of directing itself by laws; or of having any laws, properly and strictly speaking.

The

The great philosopher speaks of the laws of motion, and the law of gravitation, or attraction: but it is not to exclude the continual and powerful will of the creator, as necessary to the conservation of the world; which he strenuously maintains. But, observing that the effects of God's willing to continue the world, are uniform and regular; the term [*law*,] he thinks proper to make use of, as expressive of this constant regularity.

And, whereas, in this hypothesis, it is supposed to be a more honorable notion of God, to apprehend that he should, in creation, settle *laws*, by which the universe should be conserved; than that he should immediately and constantly actuate every thing in it:—the contrary appears to me true; since it is more agreeable to the idea of the one independent mind, upon whom all other Beings and their powers (which were produced by him) must every moment depend.

To say, that, because the skill of an artist can make a machine, which will go for a certain period, without his continually influencing it, the world may

SERM. "be conceived, in the same manner, to be

VIII. "conserved by settled laws; without the

"perpetual and immediate operation of
"the divine Being;"—— has given rise to

this, which I take to be a mistaken
opinion. There is no affinity in the

things, which are compared. Neither

the materials nor the motion are dependent
upon the artist. The skill, which he ex-

presses, and which is so much admired, is
only to put parcels of matter, of such a

figure, in such a situation, as he has ob-

served to be attended with such effects.
Whereas all Beings, with their properties

and directions, as much depend, every
moment, upon God, as modes do upon

their substances.

And this comparison is apt further to
mislead us. For the tampering, and finger-

ing of the machine, by the artist, conveys
the idea of labor and toil; which easily

slips in, when we mention God's operat-

ing immediately, in the conservation of
the universe. Whereas nothing else is

meant by it, but his constant and perpe-

tual will; which must always be conceiv-

ed to be effectual.

I would

I would then ask, "Whether God SERM.
 " does not will, every moment, the con- VIII.
 " tinuance of the universe?" If he does
 not (which is hardly consistent with his be-
 ing perfectly active, and every where pre-
 sent) the continuance of the world is not
 dependent, every moment, upon his will:
 which, I think, is not agreeable to truth,
 or becoming us to assert. If he does;
 there is no need of supposing *laws*, in the
 sense in which this hypothesis uses the
 term: since the constant willing of a Be-
 ing, that is all-powerful, must be, perpe-
 tually and every moment, effective.

The difficulties, which are represented
 to attend the immediate influence of God,
 in the conservation of the world, are, by
 the other scheme, put only one remove
 farther; but not at all taken away.

2. The appearances in the world can-
 not be accounted for, but by the continual
 influence of an intelligent mind.

When I take a survey of the world, I
 cannot but think that *Deity* immediately
 actuates all the variety of Beings, which he
 has created. If we consider the law, by
 which one body attracts another, at a di-

SERM. stance, we shall easily see, that this can-

VIII. not possibly arise from any known property of *matter*. A body (we see) does not move another according to its known qualities, but by impulse. And yet, it is surprizing that, by *gravitation*, or *attraction* (which appears every where, in the structure of this world) that all bodies have this quality, of influencing one another's motions, let them be placed at ever so great a distance from one another; at least, according to all the best observations, that we are capable of making.

It is very evident, that motion, in a direct line, is the first principle; and it would move for ever in that line, if there was no obstruction. Why does it not, then, go off, in a direct line: but so as to have the motion of a sphere? Why; This is owing to the surprizing principle of *gravitation*. Now this not being the result of any properties, that we see in bodies, (which do not move, 'till they are impelled by another body) I think it is clear and evident, that this law is constantly held in the hand of the creator. And, if so, then what we are contending for, is evident:
since,

since, from this gravitation or attraction, SERM.
all the appearances, in our structure, at VIII.
least, are to be explained.

Gravitation cannot be otherwise explained, than by the constant and immediate agency of God. It must arise from some cause, that penetrates to the centres of the sun and planets, without diminution of its power; which acts, not according to the quantity of particular surfaces, as mechanical causes are wont to do; but according to its solid contents; and whose action is every way extended to immense distances. And, surely, this cause must be God, who is immense, the first mover; and continuer of motion, in a constant and regular order, throughout the whole universe.

Without this immediate divine agency, we cannot account for the formation of a tree. How can we apprehend that its seed can be unfolded, and attract the juices of the earth: and from them, the pith, wood, bark, leaves, and fruit, be formed; according to its distinct species, by motion, in innumerable directions; when *matter* is in itself inactive, without the perpetual influence of an intelligent Being?

SERM. ^{no} Much less can the formation of our animal body be accounted for, in any other way. How is it that the brain is of such a soft consistence, as is necessary to receive the impressions of external sensible objects? and that it has inserted in it the nerves, which are the instruments of our several senses? How comes it that the scull is formed of fibres, which grow to such an hardness, as is proper to guard and secure the brain, which would otherwise be soon destroyed? How comes it to pass that there are sutures in it; that, by their yielding, many a fracture might be prevented: and, if, by any accident, a fracture should happen, it might not run thro' the whole? Whence does it arise, that there should be different sorts of teeth, (to answer various, wise purposes) in constantly the same position? and that, by their motion, a juice should be emitted from the glands, which, mingled with the food, should help concoction? Whence is it that there is a covering to the wind-pipe; to prevent any part of the food (which passes into the stomach another way) from falling into the passage which leads to the lungs;—which would

would soon destroy the animal? How is it that, by the juices of the stomach and its continual motion and warmth, the food, which enters into it, should be macerated and bruised? And, after it passes into the *duodenum*, two ducts (the one from the liver, the other from the sweet-bread) should convey different liquors, of a nature proper farther to prepare the chyle? and, when it is sufficiently prepared, that it should enter the milky canals; and pass thence into the large duct, which carries it to the subclavian vein? Who can account for the formation of the heart, with its several parts; which are so admirably fitted to circulate the blood? How is it that the arteries should constantly beat, and carry the blood round the frame? and the veins bring it back? Whence is it that the fibres of several bones should move in a strait line, till they come to a proper length: and, then, turn up in round nobs; as proper for the insertion of the muscles, and the motion of the parts? and that there should be correspondent sockets to receive them? Whence comes the motion of the muscles? Could all these things be effected by matter
and

SERM.
VIII.

SERM. and motion? Do they not require the immediate influence of the great creator? and

VIII
 “But may they not be performed by settled laws?” They, certainly, are done in a steady and constant regularity; if that be the meaning of the word, *laws*. But *laws*, taken in a strict and proper sense, *matter and motion* are not capable of; and, therefore, the supposition is imaginary and groundless.

Let us, however, suppose them. Are not these *laws*, and their effects, every moment, continued by the will of God? If not; they are, in too great a degree, independent upon God, ever to be admitted. And, if they are; there is no necessity of having recourse to any other cause, than the will of an all-powerful Being, to account for the conservation of the universe. And these laws, which are imaginary, are superseded, as useless. Thus, I think, I have clearly proved, that God, as he is the *creator and proprietor* of the universe, is, also, *the preserver* of it.

I am not here, indeed, very solicitous, which of these two opinions is entertained; if there is an acknowledgement, that

that God, not only created all things; SERM.
 but governs them all. VIII.
 Whether this go-
 vernment is immediately by himself: or,
 whether it is by laws, that he has, in the
 creation, settled: It is not so material,
 which of these sentiments are entertained
 or imbraced. Tho' I acknowledge, that,
 for the reasons, which I have already of-
 fered, I am ready to believe, that *Deity*,
 who is the creator of all things, does im-
 mediately influence and govern them all.

And that this may be plain and clear, I
 think nothing more necessary, than to con-
 sider, that God is the first and supreme
 Being, every-where present, all-powerful,
 all-wise and all-good. And it is not easy
 to conceive a Being of these perfections,
 every-where present; and yet not acting;
 when he is all-powerful: — or, that he
 should not immediately direct things,
 when he is perfectly wise; and is, also,
 the sovereign Lord; and can animate, in-
 fluence, and direct, all things; with great-
 er ease, than the most refined genius can
 conduct one thing.

It was, undoubtedly, extremely weak,
 in *Epicurus*, to represent the providence of
 God,

SERM. GOD; to be what would give him disturbance; and what would lessen and abate his happiness. He; therefore, painted his *Deity* at everlasting ease and rest; without acting at all; without designing, or influencing, any Being. He denied the providence of GOD: and, for this weak reason, viz. that, if he took care of the world, (even tho' he be supposed to have made it) it would be such an interruption to his happiness; that it would be very improper, and very unbecoming, to suppose, that either he troubled himself with the making, or the governing, the world. This opinion of *Epicurus*, to be sure, is what recurs directly to *Atheism*: or, at least, to a practice, that shall be under no manner of rule, or obligation, from the will of the *Deity*. But this opinion being weak, we have no ground to entertain such an hypothesis. Because it is evident, that, if GOD is all-perfect; if his knowledge, power, and wisdom, are unbounded; if he is every-where present; and possessed of all these perfections, in the highest degree; he can as well govern, as create, all things.

Besides;

Besides ; it appears unworthy of God, SERM.
to suppose, that he should make Beings ; VIII.
and throw of all regard to them, after he
had formed them. There is in creatures,
(we may observe) a love to their offspring :
but, upon this hypothesis, he, that placed
that in lower Beings, has nothing of it in
himself. And this appears to be unworthy of
Deity ; whose *goodness* (as well as his other
perfections) is inexpressibly great.

If we consider it carefully, we shall find,
that to exercise a providence, is most agree-
able, not only to the perfections, which
we must ascribe to God ; but, also, to the
concern, which we must suppose him to
have, for the happiness of the Beings, that
he has made capable of happiness. If
there is nothing below his creation, it is
absurd to imagine that there is any thing
below his care. And, for this reason, (I
think) we may very justly infer, that God
does not only *preserve* the Beings, which
he has made : but that he directs them ;
and maintains them ; in that order, in
which they were at first created : and that
they are constantly under his eye and
inspection.

From

From hence it follows, 1. That there is a particular providence, which extends to all persons and things, as well small as great.

This the Greek and Roman philosophers acknowledge, in general: tho' some among them dissent. Plato lays this as a foundation of his theology *ὅς ἐστιν ἐπιμετέμενος θεὸς πάντων μικρῶν καὶ μεγάλων*, That the Gods take care of all things both small and great. Aristotle (or whoever else was the author of the book *De mundo*.) cap. vi. says, That, as a governor is to a ship, as a law to a city, as a general to an army; so is God to the world. But with this difference, that they perform their business with difficulty. Whereas the divine providence doeth dispose of all, and every particular thing, without the least kind of trouble. Cicero acknowledges, "that the providence of God doeth extend, not only to mankind in general; but likewise to every particular." [*Lib. II. de nat. Deorum*.] and [*De divinat.*] *Deorum providentiâ mundus administratur; iidemque consulunt rebus humanis; neque solum universis, sed etiam singulis.* "The whole world is governed by divine
"provi-

“providence: and not only human affairs SERM.
“in general, but every particular one.” VIII.

The Stoics strenuously defend this point. Seneca [*Nat. quæst. lib. 1. præfat.*] speaking of such as denied a particular providence, says, “There are some, who think so well of themselves, as to imagine, that they are not only able to take care of their own business, but also of the affairs of others: and yet are so absurd as to question, Whether the providence of God extends to all?” *bus illi homines non ita*
To this, the scripture gives its suffrage and testimony, *Luke xii. 6, 7.* Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings: and [yet] not one of them is forgotten before God. But even the very hairs of your head are all numbred. *Acts xiv. 17.* Nevertheless, he left not himself without witness; in that he did good; and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons; filling our hearts with food and gladness. *Acts xvii. 25.*—He giveth life to all; and breath, and all things. ver. 8. In him we live, and move, and have our Being. [*καθ’ ἡμᾶς Cant.*]

2. Since God, every moment, sustains us and the whole universe; we should
take

SERM. take care that we keep up, in our minds,
 VIII. a lively sense of our perfect and intire de-
 pendence upon him, and behave accord-
 ingly.

It becomes us gratefully to acknowledge
 that every favor, which we enjoy, is con-
 ferred upon us by him: and, when we are
 afflicted, it is proper to own, that every
 affliction takes its rise from him, and is de-
 signed for our good. We should, there-
 fore, patiently submit to it, and improve
 it for those wise and excellent purposes,
 which he intends, in laying it upon us;
 viz. our progress in virtue here, and our
 everlasting happiness hereafter.





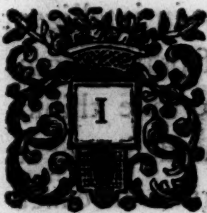
SERMON IX.

GOD, the governor of moral agents.



PSAL. xxii. 28.

*For the kingdom is the Lord's, and
he is the governor among the
nations.*



NOW come to the third SERM.
relative attribute of God. IX.

GOD is not only the
creator, preserver, and
disposer of the material
world, and of all the inferior creatures;
but he is also the governor of intelligent
creatures, and moral agents; appointing to
them laws of action; enforcing them by
proper

SERM. proper sanctions ; and rewarding, or pun-

IX. ishing them, as they behave.

~~~~~  
 GOD's government of rational creatures differs greatly from his management of Beings, that have no intelligent natures. These are under his power, and they must yield to the influences, or actings, of the divine creator and preserver. But Beings, that are intelligent, and that are free, are under a different kind of government. To suppose that such Beings, in all their determinations and actions, should be under the government of God, in the same way as material Beings are ; is to apprehend, that they are under no law : or that they are no way accountable to the great governor of the world. For whatever is the effect of necessity, tho' it should be in intelligent Beings, cannot be capable of praise, commendation, or reward. No one thinks, that, if a clock performs the design of its being made, with ever so great an exactness ; therefore it is what deserves to be rewarded : or, if it wants that regularity, that it is a proper object of revenge, or displeasure. But, when Beings are intelligent, and are capable of acting this way,  
 or

or the reverse; of acting, or suspending SERM.  
any action; then we say, *that they are* IX.  
*moral subjects*; and to be governed by rea-  
son; and by laws, that are exactly suited  
to their nature, as rational; and to the  
circumstances, in which they are placed.

Tho' the best writers, sometimes apply  
the word, [*govern*] to the whole universe,  
and to every Being in it; yet, I think, it  
would have kept our ideas more distinct,  
and have prevented some confusion; if we  
had restrained and limited the use of it to  
intelligent agents, as it is used in the text.

In treating upon *this attribute*, I shall,

I. Consider what constitutes a moral  
agent.

II. Show how God exercises his moral  
government. And,

III. Conclude with a proper applica-  
tion.

I. It is proposed to consider what con-  
stitutes a moral agent.

*Sensation*, implying perception of pre-  
sent sensible objects; some degrees of me-  
mory; reasoning, when present circum-

SERM. stances seem to threaten danger, or pro-

IX. mise pleasure; and a power to begin action; — tho' they may, and do, constitute *an agent*; are not sufficient to constitute a *moral agent*. The brutes, which have these, are *agents*; but are not under *moral government*. Therefore something more is required for *that*, than these qualifications.

It seems necessary to a *moral agent*, that there should be a power to abstract and compare ideas; and to see some principles and actions to be amiable, and others to be deformed: and, in consequence, perceive an internal obligation to receive and practise the former; and disapprove and avoid the latter. By *internal obligation*, I mean, that which arises from the reason of the thing; in contradistinction to that which takes its rise solely from the authority of a lawgiver.

That we are capable of seeing, in an abstract way, the beauty of some principles and actions; and a deformity, in others; may be clearly demonstrated by an induction of particulars.

Who



Who cannot, at first view, but see that truth, faithfulness, justice, equity, goodness, and gratitude, are beautiful? and infinitely preferable to falshood, treachery, injustice, rigor, cruelty, and ingratitude? Who is there, that will not acknowledge, that, as we are reasonable Beings, a wise regulation of our appetites and passions carries in it amiableness? and that the contrary implies deformity?

When God is our creator and preserver, from whom we have received our Beings, and on whom we, every moment, depend, who does not easily see the fitness of praising him, for the favors, which he has conferred upon us; of trusting him, for what is necessary to render us happy? of imitating him, in his perfectly moral character; since we find ourselves capable of such imitation? and of submitting to his wise and kind appointments? On the contrary; does it not appear unreasonable to leave him out of our thoughts? and to take no notice of the duties, that arise from the attributes, which belong to him: and the relation, which we stand in, to them?

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That there results obligation from the perception of fitness and unfitness, reasonableness and unreasonableness, of actions; is undeniably evident: since a reasonable Being must be obliged to act reasonably. And to act the contrary, cannot but be conceived unsuitable to his character, and unworthy the dignity of his make.

To this refers what the apostle says of the Gentiles, *Rom. ii. 14, 15.* For, when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do, by nature, the things contained in the law; these, not having the law, are a law unto themselves: which shew the works of the law written in their hearts; their conscience also, bearing witness; and their thoughts, the mean while, accusing, or else excusing, one another. Or (as the words may be rendered) their thoughts, among themselves, accusing, or excusing.

To this power of perceiving fitness or unfitness of actions; from whence arises obligation, or law; — there is joined a power of comparing, as well past as present actions, with this law: and of approving or disapproving them, as they are conformed, or disconformed to it.

From

From these induements, *moral capacity* SERM.  
results; so far as intelligence is concerned IX.  
in it.

To which must be added a power to  
act; or *freedom*, in opposition to external  
or internal necessity. If *external force* be  
supposed, *liberty* is destroyed: and the  
Being, on whom it is exercised, is rather  
acted upon, than acts. And, of conse-  
quence, accountableness must cease. The  
same may be said of internal necessity. If  
reasons of action are considered, not only  
as directive and moving, but also as cause  
and effect, including necessity; — *moral*  
*agency* must be given up; and virtue and  
vice, rewards and punishments, cease.

This *liberty*, or *freedom*, we find our-  
selves possessed of, upon the most careful  
reflection. And, if, while we think our-  
selves free, we are, at the same time, ne-  
cessitated; our powers are not to be depend-  
ed upon: — which would be no small  
reflection upon the creator; and would in-  
troduce universal doubt and scepticism.

If any should say, “ that the power to  
“ act, contrary to offered reasons, is no

SERM. "way to be valued; and, therefore, not

IX. "worth contending for"

~~~~~ The answer, in general, is, that the inquiry relates to *truth of fact*. And, if our feelings are of any weight (as, undoubtedly, they must be, when we are discoursing on our conscious powers: and, if we regard our feelings) *the truth of the fact* seems to lie on the side of *liberty*, as it has been explained.

But, if this kind of liberty be necessary to virtue; and, of consequence, to reward; it is of more importance than the objection would insinuate.

In a word, no moral agent is wise that does not follow the direction of his instructed mind; and who does not determine and act according to the best reasons, which he can call in, and present to himself: tho' it is necessary to his being virtuous and rewardable, that he should have a power to act the contrary.

And, if it be said, "that, in such determinations, there is always some antecedent reason, to influence:" The reply is, that, if influencing be considered

only

only as a motive; and not as cause and effect, by necessity;—it may be allowed: IX. and liberty, as I have stated it, not overturned.

Having settled wherein *moral agency* consists: I come, now,

II. To shew how God exercises his *moral government*.

1. By placing, in our reasonable frame, a law,

A rule of action always results from the powers which constitute moral agency. The perfect rectitude of God, who is the first and most perfect reason, consists in his exact and invariable determining and acting according to his infinite view of what is right and fit. The moral agents, which he has created, are under the law of their reasonable make; and are obliged to act reasonably, or according to the truth of things, as far as they are capable of discerning it.

2. God exercises his moral government over us, by putting in us an internal monitor; which gives us applause, when we practise

SERM. practise agreeably to the law of reason;

IX. and fails not to reprove us, when we act
the contrary, even in the greatest secrecy.

Conscience, which is this monitor, is the application of the power, we have, of comparing our actions with the law of our reasonable make; and of judging of their agreement or disagreement therewith. If they agree, approbation and applause will follow. If they disagree, censure and fear of the divine displeasure will insue.

This power should be carefully instructed to judge aright of the law, and of the application of it to all the cases which arise in human conduct. Its voice should be constantly attended to, and complied with. It never should be opposed, or silenced; or lulled asleep, by the opiate of sensible amusements: lest, by any distress; it should be roused, and we fall under its severest lashes. If we steddily conform to its dictates, we shall always enjoy a serenity of mind, that will not fail of making us happy: and the contrary conduct will ever produce inquietude and anguish; such as no external objects can assuage;

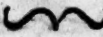
swage; and which is not to be removed SERM.
but by sincere and unfeigned repentance. IX.

3. God exercises his moral government over us, in giving us such propensities and affections, as are not only suited to our present state; but also, are in aid of virtue.

Anger is put in us to secure ourselves from injury; and to excite us to do what is in our power to redress the injuries which are offered to others. We find, in our make, private and social affections; and both tend to virtue. They are, indeed, to be carefully balanced by *reason*, which is designed, by the great governor of the world, to be το ἡγεμονικόν, the leading and governing principle of all our actions.

Self-preservation guards us from rash and hazardous enterprizes; and prevents our quitting life, through excess of any passion: which would be absurd and unreasonable conduct.

Social affections tend to *social virtue*. Benevolence is in itself excellent, and productive of much fair and beautiful fruit. The *εὐπρεπὴς*, the affection, which parents have to their offspring, has a tendency to secure

SERM. secure a careful education of them, and to
 IX.  allay the uneasinesses which generally attend it. Compassion to the distressed strongly influences us to relieve them. A value for the esteem of others pushes us upon doing what is proper to attain it: which esteem (as bad as the world is) results from worthy and virtuous behavior; at least, in appearance; which is as far as men are capable of judging.

However; though, when these affections have produced the effects intended, as mere instincts, without reasonable choice; the persons, who are influenced by them, cannot be looked upon, as *virtuous*, in the strictest sense of the word; yet God, by them, keeps up and maintains tolerable order and regularity in human societies.

I would make only one farther remark under this head, which is, "that *social affections* are quite distinct from *private ones*."

Some, who would be thought *philosophers*, represent, indeed, that benevolence, pity to the miserable, and love of esteem, with the other social affections, spring only from *selfishness*; and have no other view.

If

If we, by that term, mean happiness; it SERM. must be granted, that men cannot avoid IX.

pursuing what they apprehend proper to make them happy. But, by *selfishness*, in opposition to social affections, many make themselves extremely miserable: as others do, by social affections, when they are unreined, and not under proper regulation.

Nothing is more evident than that the *private* and *social* affections are different principles; and are concerned about different objects; and have, in a different way, an influence upon our happiness: and consequently, are distinct the one from the other, and should never be confounded. Though, when well managed, both conspire to our happiness.

4. God exercises his moral government over us, by connecting happiness with virtue, and misery with vice; both in a private and social character.

Clearness of thought, soundness of judgment, peace of mind, vigor of constitution, fairness of reputation, and a quiet enjoyment of what is necessary in life, are the happy fruits, which naturally spring from

SERM. from sincere piety and extensive virtue.

IX. And the contrary are the sad consequences of impiety and vice.

Who, that reads history, does not see that the rise, growth, and prosperity, of states depend upon the general practice of virtue? and their decay and ruine, upon the prevalence of corruption and vice? These are the wise settlements of our kind governor; who would, hereby, take us off from the courses that lead to misery; and excite us to those that bring us to true happiness.

5. God exercises his moral government over men, by the remarkable and extraordinary calamities, which he, sometimes, thinks proper to inflict, to awaken them to consideration, and excite them to reform and amend their conduct.

All natural evil, in this life, is designed, by the governor of the world, to produce moral good: and should, therefore, be regarded as disciplinary. *Is. xxvi. 9. When thy judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world ought to learn righteousness.*

Peculiar

Peculiar and distinguished favors, in SERM.
like manner, are conferred with the same IX.
intention; to engage those, to whom they
are vouchsafed, to a chearful and steddy
obedience.

6. God exercises his moral government
over men, by the fears of punishment,
which attend the guilty; and the hopes
of reward, which the sincerely virtuous
find springing up in their minds; if not in
this, yet in another and future, state.

That there are such fears and hopes, is
evident, from the suffrage and testimony
of the best and wisest writers, in every
age; and from every one's own experi-
ence.

III. I now come to conclude, by draw-
ing some inferences from this subject.

1. From what has been said upon *moral*
agency, it appears that the doctrine of *fa-*
tality is unreasonable and groundless.

The patrons of it allow that we think
ourselves *free*; while reasons, working
necessarily, render us only thinking ma-
chines.

It

SERM. It is true, when some of them imagine;

IX. that all, at last, shall be brought to happiness, it carries in it the appearance of a good-natured scheme. But, (besides that this way of thinking destroys any dependence upon the most careful use of our powers) it overturns virtue and vice, rewards and punishments; and takes away the highest good, that a reasonable creature is capable of, *viz.* the pleasure, which arises from a *free* choice of virtue, in opposition to strong temptations to the contrary.

— And farther: upon this scheme, *the goodness of God is necessary.* And, then, what foundation is there of thankfulness and gratitude?

2. If from reasonable nature, arises *law*; we should consider ourselves as always under an obligation to conform to its dictates.

The law of reason is prior to any other: and no succeeding one can vacate or disannul it. Its obligation is eternal and immutable; while the powers, from whence it results, continue.

This shows the folly of those, who with a smile (as if they were going to say some-

something extremely ingenious) tell those SERM.
they converse with, "that they do not IX.
"pretend to religion and sanctity." Which

is saying, in other words, *that they make no pretensions to be reasonable.* For religious and moral obligations arise out of the reasonable powers, which constitute us moral agents, and are inseparable from them.

3. Since the design of God's *moral government* is to prevent, or recover from sin, and promote virtue; the supposition, that God has, by any constitution of his, brought men under an intire inability to do what is reasonable and fit; — must be looked upon to be extremely absurd.

Such a scheme appears evidently to be inconsistent with God's character, as *moral governor*, and to thwart and contradict his own intention and design. It, also, removes all guilt: since what is necessary, by a divine constitution, cannot render any one either criminal, or accountable.

4. *Lastly*, From what has been offered, it appears reasonable that we should fall in with the design of God's moral government; by promoting in ourselves and others extensive virtue.

SERM. 10. This must be doing the greatest good,

IX. we are capable of: and recommend us to the divine favor. We may mistake, if we apprehend that particular afflictions are laid upon us for some particular sin: and may be guilty of unjust censoriousness; if we judge that those, upon whom remarkable judgments are inflicted, are greater sinners than others. But we can never err, by a careful and constant endeavor to improve both the mercies and afflictions of God, to gain a greater victory over sin, and attain higher and more eminent degrees of every virtue. Hereby we express our approbation of the intention and view, which God has, in his *moral government*; and hereby we shall ourselves finally obtain unspeakable and everlasting felicity.



S E R M O N X.

A general and particular providence.



PSAL. ciii. 19.

— His kingdom ruleth over all.



AS God governs particular men, indued with reason, by proper laws, attended with suitable effects: So he exercifes his government over Nations. For, as he has placed in us, principles of society, the happiness of men is to result from the combinations of men.

That Deity exercifes a government over nations and over societies, will, I think, be very evident, if we attend to the first rise,

SERM. the progress, and the period, of several
X. governments, that have been in the world.

— *The Roman government* arose from very small beginnings; and gave no reason, to any considerate person, to expect its attaining the height, to which it, at last, arrived. And yet, we find, that what related to that and the other three great monarchies, was, with exactness and with many particularities, foretold, by the prophet *Daniel*: and that even the sagacious man, *Porphyrus*, could make no objection to this; but, by saying, “that these prophecies were all “forged, and palmed upon men: and “that they were wrote, after these governments had had their final periods.”

It is surprizing how men will be biased. This answer is easily refuted; because this prediction was translated into the *Greek language*, by order of *Ptolemy*, three hundred years before its coming about.

It is evident that our Savior's prediction, of the destruction of *Jerusalem*, was forty years before it happened; and attended with such minute circumstances that it could never be the result of acute conjecture, or a wise sagacity.

From

From the nature of things, we may easily observe, that, as virtue is the stability of a nation, so vice is its destruction. And, therefore, it appears, that God has a concern, and interests himself, in the happiness, or in the misery, of societies; according to their real virtue, or the reverse.

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I find, indeed, that some *wise Heathens* owned *the providence of God, in general*; but they did not own that God exercised *a particular providence*, over minute, or little, things.

Here I would remark, that, upon what is little, depends a great variety of things. Surely; a man must be perfectly unacquainted with the history of the world, who does not acknowledge this. As, therefore, many extraordinary things spring from little and minute things; therefore, perhaps, we may not be capable of knowing all the circumstances, and all the consequences, that will follow, from what we may call *minute*.

But, not to argue any farther from this; Why may not God take care of every thing? Is he not all-wise, all-knowing, all-powerful, and every-where present?

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How can he, therefore, but take notice of every thing? For he is intimately present, even to our very thoughts: and there is no place, or space, from whence he is excluded. And, therefore, we must conclude, that he does see; and does, by his powerful hand, guard and govern every person, and every event.

But some will say, "This appears not to be the case; if we take a view of the world: when a very notorious villain falls upon, and murders, an innocent man."

I am not saying, whether God interposes, in a way, that is inconsistent with his general government. The query is, "Whether he does not know and see all things, and all events; and permits them, and over-rules them for the grand purposes of his government?" We may think of our own understandings as we please: but, unless we know all relations and circumstances, we cannot be capable of giving a clear and full judgment, in every thing. How do we know, what an action refers to, or what ends may be answered, by every particular action? Who can

can tell all the lines, that are drawn from SERM. every action, and the relations they stand in? However; this is certain, I think, and indisputable; that God sees, knows, orders, directs, and over-rules, every thing, as he pleases. There is no reason to imagine why *Deity* should so interpose, as not to make his influence, or his actings, uniform, and agreeable to his unerring wisdom. We are not to entertain such an opinion of ourselves, as to judge things not to be under the government of God; because we see, that they arise from such and such causes, in our view. If we could take in the whole compass of the divine government; and the references of one thing to another; and the relation of this world to a future: Could we have an intire knowlege of *the whole scheme of providence*; we might, then, very easily see things, which we judge not to be under the direction and influence of providence, to be actually under his guidance and government: not, indeed, so as to take away agency; for then his government would be inconsistent to his creating free agents: but he does direct and govern, so,

SERM. as that, upon the whole, it will appear, to
 X. any intelligent mind, worthy of God,
 and agreeable to his perfections.

I am very sensible that here will arise
 an objection: *viz.* "This is the common
 " way of solving difficulties: it is only say-
 " ing, *that we see but part of the scheme;*
 " *and, then, all the objections and difficul-*
 " *ties, which arise, are removed and an-*
 " *swered."*

This, undoubtedly, is made use of, in
 some instances, in which there is no foun-
 dation, or just ground, for the use of it.
 Supposing I see part of a scheme, that is
 very unpolished; which has no marks of
 the wisdom of the artificer; I can very
 well judge, that this is rude; and has not
 the strokes of a masterly hand; tho' I do
 not see the whole plan. In like manner,
 if any plead for the truth of any thing in-
 consistent, I am not to fall in with such
 an absurdity, tho' I see not the whole
 scheme. But that is not the case here.
 We see enough of the scheme of provi-
 dence to lead us to virtue: and, when we
 see that it has evident marks of prevailing
 wisdom and goodness, we argue, from the
 perfec-

perfections of *Deity*, that the other parts SERM.
of it, which lie out of our sight, must, X
also, be wise and good. And we may
see, that this government arises from his
being every-where present, all-perfect, all-
wise, all-knowing, and all-powerful. So
that this objection is not built on the same
foundation, as when it is raised against any
thing, that is offered, which is inconsis-
tent to a true idea of the nature and go-
vernment of the world.

Thus far in general.

What is farther proposed, upon this
subject, may be comprized under the fol-
lowing heads.

I. We shall consider what are the seve-
ral parts, that are comprehended under the
general term, *Providence*.

II. Prove that there is *a providence*.

III. Conclude, by making those practi-
cal remarks, that may be of use, to direct
our conduct.

I. Let us consider what are the several
parts, that are comprehended under the
general term, *Providence*. Under this
general

SERM. general word, *Providence*, are comprehended *preservation*, and *direction* or *government*.

1. *Preservation*.—As we must apprehend God to be the first cause, which gave Being, where there was none before, we must conceive that the creatures, which he has made, are sustained and continued by him. It is impossible to apprehend any Being made of God, that is independent upon him. And, if the Beings, which he has created, are dependent, they must be conceived to be preserved by the determination of God.

We find that the skill of men reaches no farther than the framing and modelling the qualities of the Beings, which they converse with. And, as long as the subjects of these effects of human skill continue, it is certain that there will, from hence, arise a continuation of the instances of their skill. But the very Beings themselves, and their powers of acting, are dependent upon God, as the first cause: and, of consequence, he does, every moment preserve and continue them.

2. As

2. As God does preserve the Beings, SERM.
which he has made; so he does direct and govern them. X.

The material parts of the creation are, without doubt, under his direction. It is by one simple act, or manner of acting, that they are kept in the same order, in which they were first created. *The laws of gravitation* will account for all the appearances, that occur to us, in the material parts of the creation. But then, in regard to intelligent agents, he has expressed his government over them, by giving them *laws*, which arise from their intelligent nature; and enforcing those laws, by the different consequences that attend their temper and behavior.

He has added *a revelation*, in which, in the purest and most extensive manner, the duties, that arise in our reasonable nature, are re-inacted; or set in such a light, as may be of great advantage to all, who will attend to them. He has, in a very clear and distinct manner, opened a future state of retribution; and set before us those particular and minute circumstances, in which the last and final determination of the

SERM. the states of mankind will be decided: so
 X. that we, now, are at no loss to understand
 the procedure of that great day of trial.
 And we do not want circumstances enough
 to influence and animate us.

We are, farther, to consider, that God must be apprehended, by all, that will imploy carefully their thoughts, to have an access to our minds. It is not to be supposed that we can, in the same manner, or degree, have access to one another, by the medium of speech. And the author of our nature may be conceived to have such access, or approach, to our minds, as may lead us to apprehend, that he can influence and direct, comfort and support us. Whoever denies this power, can have no other argument against it; but that it is inconsistent to our characters as *agents*. But, I apprehend, there is no just foundation of objecting this, against the divine Being's having access to our thoughts. We have influence upon others. We see, sometimes, that we prevail by persuasion. And cannot we apprehend it much easier that God can, consistently with our being agents, have such access; and give us such
 views

views of things, as shall prevail with our minds to determine and act? This is not at all inconsistent with our being free, or our being agents; any more than the arguments, which we make use of, to one another; and which prevail, to direct and influence actions; are inconsistent to agency.

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X.

II. Let us now consider whether there is such a *providence*, or no; that does, not only preserve, but over-rule, direct, and govern all persons, and effects.

I think this must arise from the consideration of the divine perfection; who knows all things; who, by his infinite wisdom, adapts one thing to another, in the most perfect manner. He must be conceived to be present every-where: for the heaven of heavens cannot contain him; neither can place, or space, bound him. As he exists by *absolute necessity*, he exists always, and every-where. He is a Being, that is possessed of unbounded goodness, as well as knowledge, wisdom, and power. Now it appears, that such a Being, who is every-where, and all-powerful; all-wise
and

SERM. and all-good ; and the author of all things ;
 X. must constantly regard all things. And
 ~~~~~ that any thing should be disregarded, or  
 neglected, by him ; is what is very difficult to form even an apprehension of.

Besides ; if we consider, we shall find, that he has planted in all the creatures, which are indued with sense, and with any degree of reason, a disposition to take care of their offspring. And can we imagine that God, the father of all, should make a world : and, when it was created, disregard it, or neglect to exercise any care, or concern, about it ? This appears to be quite disagreeable to clear and strong reasoning.

But let us farther consider ; that, if we remove all care and concern from the common parent of all, about the creatures, which he has made, what reason is there to express any religious act towards him ? What should lead us to offer up our praises to him ? Or what foundation is there for prayer ?

But here, methinks, I hear some objecting, “ As for *praise* ; that may be made use of : but, for *prayer*, it is extremely  
 “ absurd.

“absurd. All things are under the direction and influence of the divine mind; and they are what he intended they should be. They are not at all liable to any alteration.”

SERM.

X.

This objection has no good foundation. Indeed, if they supposed, that all these things were under the government of *those laws*, which God has placed in them; and that he has left them only to the force of those laws; there might be some color in the objection. But pray; how do they know that God has left all to the effects of the powers, which he has given them? or to such certain laws? Can matter, or motion, have a law; any more than that they are directed, supported, and governed by the first cause? If we call that *a law*, which is an uniform and steady existence, or appearance; *that* may be from the *Divine Being*, and from his method of acting. And, I think, it cannot be denied, but that it is so, in reference to *gravitation*. There is no accounting for this, by the rules of mechanism; or by any observations, that we are capable of making. How can one body move another, without

SERM. without contact? There is no body moves

X.

another, but by impulse: and that according to the surface of the body. But pray; how comes it about, that a body will attract another body, at a great distance; and where we cannot conceive there should be any impulse? This is owing to *gravitation*. And it appears most likely that God holds this in his own hands; or, that he does immediately attract, or gravitate; as he is infinitely knowing, and has a full apprehension of what is sufficient to answer all the views and designs of this creation.

It may, here again, be objected; "If there can be no alteration; what avail our prayers?"

Why; I do not allow, at all, that there is no alteration: or that God may not direct; though he does it, in such a manner, as appears to us quite agreeable to secondary causes. But, suppose he did not, would it not be a proper thing to own our dependence upon him? And, by addressing to him, acknowledge that he is infinitely wise, and powerful, just and good? to acknowledge that all things are under his



his view, and under his conduct; who is SERM.  
a Being of all-perfection? And, by this, X.  
we gain a proper temper of mind; what-  
ever events may arise.

I know of no religion, that teaches us, to address to God, for this or the other particular favor; or that gives us an assurance, or expectation, of receiving that particular favor, or blessing. I am sure, *Christianity* does not. And I am satisfied, while we address unto God, as the cause of all Beings; and in whom all do exist; and, as the governor and director of all; we, by this, may attain such a disposition, and such a way of thinking; as, if affliction does arise; and if particular blessings are denied us; we are more serene and calm, and upon the justest principles. That God, who is the governor of all; if we are not wanting to ourselves, will overrule every event for our true happiness. But I cannot so readily give up our obligation to *prayer*. We are generally apt to imagine that, because events appear to be the result of secondary causes, therefore, God has no hand in them: or, if he has, that the whole plan is in his mind; and

SERM. every turn, and every event, will be just

X. according to that scheme. But I wonder  
 how any should enter into such a way of  
 thinking. The winds are at the direction  
 of the divine Being. The seas are restrain-  
 ed by him. We know very well what  
 extraordinary turns, or events, arise to  
 men; both by the winds and by the seas.  
 We know that, by rain, some parts of the  
 earth will be fruitful: or, by too much  
 rain, there may arise a dearth. We may  
 find that rain falls just as the *Divine Being*  
 thinks proper. And, from hence, may  
 arise want, or plenty. The waves and the  
 winds may be the occasion of sad losses to  
 some: and they may prove the happy oc-  
 casion of expressing gratitude to the gover-  
 nor of the world, in regard to others. All  
 these things are looked upon, by careless  
 and unthinking persons, to be from such  
 causes, as are not at all under the direction of  
 the first, all-perfect mind. But why should  
 I think so? I can see no reason for it;  
 when God is all-wise, powerful, and good;  
 and every-where present: and can over-  
 rule those things, which appear to us to  
 be secondary causes, in a manner, that is  
 exactly

*particular providence.*

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exactly agreeable to the wise governor of SERM.  
all. And, if he does, by these, which we X.

call *secondary causes*, bring upon us any affliction; we are not to apprehend that this is not designed by the first, all-perfect, moral agent; to train us up to, and to make us meet for, that, wherein our truest happiness consists.

*The government of God* does not only reach to material Beings; but the hearts of all men are in his hands; and he turns them, as the rivers of water. He has access to our thoughts: and can, by every trial, bring us to reflect, and to consider the laws of reason, that we are under; and cure the irregularities of our conduct. And, therefore, we are to suppose, that his government does not end in the events, which arise from the present order of things; but we must conclude that he can support, assist, strengthen, and enable us to answer the moral intentions and purposes of his government.

I know very well, Some apprehend, "that he has ordered all things, in such a way, that, for such a period of years, " the world shall continue; and produce  
" all

SERM. "all the events, and effects, which we  
X. "see."

~ This, I think, cannot be made to appear. For, tho', in judging of the skill of men; we, indeed, suppose greater dexterity to be discovered, in making a machine, that will go a thousand years; than there is in being continually present, and actuating every spring of that machine:—there is something that is insufficient in this comparison. Because we cannot suppose that an argument from artists, or *men*, should conclude with regard to *the governor of the world*. When every part of this government of the material system is pointed to moral government; that very much alters the case. We may frame a clock. But, if a clock go on for a thousand years, there is no referring this to a moral government. But, when we see, that all the exercises of *the divine government* here, even with regard to the material system of things, is pointed to a moral government; or to the government of moral agents; there is not the same reason to argue, that this world is framed; just as, by an artist, a clock is framed.

We



We find that this world appears to have had some changes, arising from the prevalence of vice. The earth was cursed to our first parents. And, when *Cain* was guilty of that barbarous act of murdering his brother, there was a greater degree of sterility that attended the land. Again; prevailing vice brought on a general deluge. And other remarkable instances of the punishment of vice, in the course of providence, may be found.

It is a very easy thing to represent this, in a light, that may excite laughter: but men, that will reason, from facts, and the truth of things, will easily see, that there is no just ground to set things in such a ridiculous light.

If it be said, "that this of calculating the world to continue, in such an order, for a certain period, is not inconsistent to a moral government." *That*, indeed, would give some color of reason, for admitting the scheme. But yet, it is quite uncertain; it only goes upon a supposition, that, when we see a machine finished by men; we may, then, apply it to *Deity*: but we have no just foundation for it.

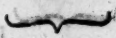
SERM. I would now come to conclude this subject, by making proper reflections.

X. *i.* How unhappy, how unreasonable, and absurd, is the scheme of *Atheism*? And how much reason have we to wish for, as well as to believe a God of such perfections, as to be easily capable of directing, and governing all the Beings, which he has made?

There is no principle so dark; nor any more melancholy, than to think, that all events, here below, are the result of chance; and undirected and unguided by a Being, that is perfect in knowledge, wisdom, goodness, and power.

There is nothing would create, to a considerate person, more distress, more real sorrow of mind; than to imagine, that this world, either made itself, or that it is put off, by the divine Being, without his continuing to have the least care, or concern, in it.

It is the most pleasing thought to apprehend an all-perfect Being, that created all things, to be at the helm; and to direct and guide all things. It is certainly for the happiness of those that are innocent and virtuous;

virtuous; or that repent of their sins; SERM.  
and, in their future conduct, act consist- X.  
ent to those laws, that God has made. 

2. We may, from hence, infer, that our case is much better and safer than some would represent it.

We are to use our powers aright, if there should spring up difficulties, or what should occasion distress. And, then, it is a very delightful thought to apprehend, that God is near me, who is infinitely kind and good; and can, consistent with my being free, communicate and impart what may be of great comfort to me. This is that, which animates and encourages men of virtue, to go on with alacrity and courage, in this world. We know that God is the highest virtue; and every way a most perfect Being. And he must approve of that, which makes us like to him. And, if he approves of it; we cannot fail of being happy:— not now, perhaps; or, at least, not perfectly so. But, surely, that Being, who is most holy, will make those that resemble him in his moral character, happy, finally, and for-ever. This, therefore, must encourage

SERM. us to go thro' all the storms and tempests,

X. which await this life, with firmness and resolution of mind; and to persevere in the practice of sincere piety and real holiness: that, when we come to leave this world, we may have a just and a well-grounded hope, that we shall, at last, be made perfectly holy, and consequently perfectly happy, in his heavenly and eternal kingdom.

3. From what has been said, we may learn how to think and speak right and exactly of the *divine providence*.

I am persuaded that this argument has been brought into contempt, by the weakness of some, who have not expressed themselves in a manner agreeable to the ideas, or sentiments, which we ought to form of this subject. In every little thing, they are ready to express their belief of the immediate interposition of God. And they do it, sometimes, in such a manner, as leads people to entertain a wrong opinion. However: this is certain, that we have the highest reason to say, "that every person and every event is constantly under the providence of God."

With



With regard to *preservation*, this can-  
not be denied. And, with regard to go-  
vernment, I think it is apparent, that all

SERM.

X.

things are so under his direction, as that they  
answer his general design; and, upon the  
whole, have a view to our being recovered  
and raised to a temper and life, which is  
necessary to make us happy.

We may then say, that nothing befalls  
us, but it comes from God: that is, he  
is the author of every event. And, I am  
sure, that this agrees exactly to the clearest  
sentiments, which we can form of things.

We may farther see, that, tho' we are  
not, always, upon our praying for them,  
to expect particular temporal favors: or to  
imagine, that he, who governs the world,  
will not regard the good of the whole: yet,  
notwithstanding, these are in his hands and  
government; and they are designed to train  
us up to the practice of virtue; and make  
us qualified for a state of complete happi-  
ness. For we are not to limit *the provi-  
dence of God*; and think that it is confined  
to this present scene. This is a mistake:  
and it is, from this, that many other errors  
take their rise. They argue, " that this  
" scene

SERM. "scene of things is to include all, and no

X. "other state to succede." But take the  
 ~~~~~ other world into view: and, then, these evils, which God permits to befall any, are capable of accomplishing our highest good and perfect happiness. Certainly, therefore, it is of the greatest consequence to settle right ideas of the divine providence: and to take care to express them in such a manner, as may be most becoming those who profess their belief of divine revelation.

4. This is a foundation of support under all the vicissitudes and changes, which states and governments are liable to, in this world.

The psalmist says, The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice. This is a foundation of comfort to any considerate person, that whatsoever turns up in affairs, relating to the public, there is one, who is LORD OF LORDS; that directs and over-rules them; and will ever be ready to support us in our right conduct, whatever events arise.

5. From hence, we may see, the reasonableness of every one's being content
 with

with the circumstances, in which God SERM.
has placed them. X.

I do not mean, that we should neglect the use of our powers to attain such circumstances, as may make us more capable of enjoying life; or of being beneficial to others: but we must still remember, that it is *the providence of God*, which exalts any; and he it is, also that depresses. And, since all circumstances are under his direction, surely we ought hence to infer, that it becomes us to behave in a manner becoming reasonable Beings, and the character of Christians; that we may not, in any respect, deviate from the rule of our intelligent nature.

6. *As the providence of God is over all his works*; we may have courage to pass thro' all the various scenes, that may arise in this life. Whatever happens, we are still in the hands of a kind and gracious governor. And we have the justest reason to cast our care upon him. For he, who has all-perfection, has been so kind as to promise, that he will take care of us. He does not suffer us to be without any expectation

SERM. pection of strength and assistance, proportionate to every difficulty, that we are called to conflict with.

X.

7. This, surely, does also bespeak terror to the wicked, that are determined to go on, in a course of vice.

He, that is LORD OF LORDS, views every act of rebellion, that they are guilty of; and has almighty power and can reach them, and they can never escape out of his hand. We know that this Being exercises a moral government: and, of consequence, will set his character, as a wise and just governor, in a due light: and will distinguish those, who are his sincere servants and votaries, from others, that go on in a state of impenitency.

All things are in his hands. He has the direction and government of them. And we know that, as he is our governor, we shall be accountable to him for all the talents, which he has favored us with: and that we shall receive a proportionate reward, if good; and proportionate punishment, if we violate his commands.

8. From

8. From hence we may see how reasonable it is for us to trust in God, and to depend upon him. SERM.
X.

For, tho' we are not called to depend upon him, in any instances, where we have no ground, by his promise or declaration, to expect his favor; yet, in general, we are sure, that, to the truly good, who put their trust in him, all things shall, in the event, prove happy; and be over-ruled for their spiritual and eternal good.

This, certainly, should excite every considerate man to trust and depend, in a proper and right manner, on God. For, as he is the creator, so he is the governor of all things.

To conclude this discourse,

9. *Lastly*, Let us take care to act agreeably to those duties, that arise from the relation, we stand in, to a Being, that governs and directs all things; who is the original of all; who preserves them every moment, in their faculties and powers, and who does direct and guide all, to the purposes

SERM. purposes of his most wise and excellent
 X. moral government.

Let us, therefore, act like Beings, that are capable of resembling God, in his holiness, or moral character. This is the end, that we should ever have in our view; whether in prosperity or affliction. All things are to attemper us to heaven, by a disposition of mind and conduct of life, formed to an agreeableness to those perfections of the *Divine Being*, which are imitable by us, and are capable of being transplanted into our temper and life.

Unless we attain this character, of arising to a resemblance of *Deity*, in his moral perfections, we cannot be happy. *Moral evil produces natural evil*. We feel that all the interests and pursuits, that we can have in our view, are destroyed and ruined by the exercise and practice of vice. He, who is the moral governor of the world, has settled things in this manner. And we must observe his laws; and be led, by the consequences of obedience and disobedience, to see, that our true perfection

and

and happiness must arise from the divine SERM.
image. We must resemble him, that is X.
true and faithful, righteous and good; or
we can never be capable of being happy.
He has taught us this, in the method of
his moral government. He has plainly
connected distress and anguish of mind,
with the guilt of violating his laws. He,
does, by his providence, teach us, that we
cannot be happy, without attaining to that,
which is the proper perfection of our intel-
ligent make.

Let this, therefore, be our GRAND
DESIGN; and be steddily and constantly
pursued. And let all our concerns, with
a sensible world, be so managed and im-
proved, that we may increase in the hatred
of vice, and in the love of extensive virtue
and holiness. Then we fall in with the
kind design and government of GOD.
Then are we complying with what is our
duty, and the perfection of our make.
And, then, are we growing up to a like-
ness to him; and thereby to a capacity of
being for-ever happy in his presence and
glory.

S E R-

and happiness must arise from the divine spirit. We must reflect on him, that is

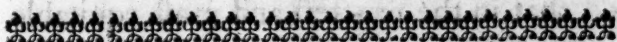
image. We must reflect on him, that is true and lawful, righteous and good; or we can never be capable of being happy. He has taught us this in the method of his moral government. He has plainly connected distress and anguish of mind, with the guilt of violating his laws. He does, by his providence, teach us that we cannot be happy, without striving to that which is the proper perfection of our intelligent make.

Let this, therefore, be our GRAND Design; and be steadily and constantly pursued. And let all our concerns, with a feasible world, be so managed and improved, that we may increase in the hatred of vice, and in the love of extensive virtue and holiness. Then we fit in with the kind design and government of God. Then are we complying with what is our duty, and the perfection of our make. And, then, are we growing up to a likeness to him; and thereby to a capacity of being forever happy in his presence and glory.



S E R M O N XI.

God, the judge of all.



P s A L. ix. 8.

*And he shall judge the world in
righteousness.*



THE attributes of GOD, SERM] which arise from his re- XI.

lation to other Beings, are these; viz. That he is the first cause, or creator, of all things: that he is the

preserver of all: and that he is the governor of intelligent Beings, and moral agents, who are capable of being governed by law.— We have treated on these; and now procede to the fourth and last of the relative attributes; viz. that of his being their JUDGE.

VOL. II.

Q

When

SERM. When I say, God will be the judge of

XI. *moral agents*, I would be understood to

mean, that he will, some time or other, reward such, as have, in the course of their actions, expressed a dutiful regard to his laws; and punish those, who, on the contrary, have infringed and violated them; and that in the exactest and most equitable proportion.

If this is not done in the present life (and that it is not, will, I think, be granted by every considerate person) there must be another state, in which there will be such an exact and equitable distribution.

Some have apprehended, that, from the immateriality of the soul, its immortality will follow: and consequently, not only its future existence, but its future existence interminably.

That the mind, or conscious principle, which has a power in itself to begin action, cannot arise from matter and motion, in any conceivable refinement, or direction, is highly probable; if not demonstrably certain.—Matter is sluggish and inactive: and, when at rest, can never change its state, by beginning motion. Whereas the conscious

conscious principle has a power to begin, SERM.
or stop, action; or vary it, at pleasure. XI.

The known properties of *matter* and *consciousness* are so intirely distinct; that the one cannot be affirmed of the other, in a literal, tho' in a figurative, sense, sometimes, they may.

A scarlet thought, a blue perception, a square idea, and the like, appear, at first view, absurd: though, in a figurative sense, we may, properly enough, say, a solid judgment.

Besides; some of the properties of matter are incompatible with those of the mind. *Body* is infinitely divisible; and the particles of our organized frame are in a continual flux. I would ask, "Do the atoms, which fly off from our bodies every day, retain consciousness?" Then each must be, in part or in whole, conscious. The former is absurd; since consciousness is something that is intire, simple, and uniform: and the latter would imply innumerable, distinct consciousnesses; where there is but one supposed.

Farther: how do the particles, which succede those that fly off, come to be

SERM. conscious? Can it be imagined, that, by

XI. any combination of these, consciousness
 can arise; when every one of them
 singly is unconscious?

Again: *Matter* cannot penetrate *matter*; but the conscious principle can reflect upon its own consciousness.

By these and such like reasonings, it is probably, if not certainly, clear, that the conscious principle (which we call *mind*) cannot arise from *matter* and *motion*, how refined and modified soever.

From hence it follows, that the dissolution of the body, does not infer the cessation of the existence of the mind: but, on the contrary, it is probable, that it may, notwithstanding, continue to exist; especially when it is, in its own nature, simple and indivisible *.

To argue, however, from its *immateriality*, to its future existence and immortality,

* Nihil est in animis admistum, nihil concretum, nihil copulatum, nihil coagmentatum, nihil duplex: quod cum ita sit, certe nec secerni, nec dividi, nec discerpi, nec distrahi potest; nec interire igitur. Est enim interitus quasi discessus, et secretio, ac direptus earum partium; quæ, ante interitum, junctione aliquâ tenebantur. *Cic. Tusc. 2.*

lity, is inconclusive; since that depends SERM.
 on the will of the creator:— unless we XI.
 can find a medium, which will probably,
 or certainly, prove, that it will be the plea-
 sure of the first cause, that it should have a
 future conscious existence. And I appre-
 hend that the consideration of God, as a
 wise lawgiver, will furnish us with one,
 which will be found, upon examination,
 to be clear and indisputable.

To make out this important truth more
 clearly, we propose to treat of it, in the
 following method.

I. Consider that we are capable of *mo-
 ral government*.

II. That God acts towards us in that
 character.

III. That it will appear, from the ex-
 ercise of his *moral government*, that, to
 vindicate the excellencies, or perfections,
 of God, there must be a state of retri-
 bution; and that we shall be judged by
 him.

IV. After we have explained this attri-
 bute; as far as the light of nature will af-
 sist us; we may add what is offered to us,

SERM. in the last and most perfect revelation,

XI. which God has made of his will, to us,
by his son.

V. I shall conclude, by making practical remarks.

I. Let us consider that we are capable of moral government.

Nothing, I think, can be more plain, than that we are formed so, as to be fit for moral government: or, in other words, to be accountable,

If we reflect, we shall certainly find, that we have powers, whereby we can discern the beauty and fitness of some principles and actions; and the deformity and unfitness of other principles and actions. Whatever powers, creatures, below us, may have, it appears that they are not capable of comparing one thing with another, to see the beauty, or fitness, of some actions; and the deformity and unfitness of others; — which ever appears to be requisite for any Being, that is capable of coming under a law, or of being judged.

We

We find farther, that we can reflect SERM.
 upon past actions, and compare them with XI.
 the rule of fitness, or the contrary. It is
 also clear, if we act disagreeably to the
 law of reason, which is the law of our
 make; we feel distress and anguish: and
 that even in actions, which no one can
 know of, but ourselves. A consciousness
 of them fills the mind with uneasiness and
 distress. And there is no possibility of lay-
 ing aside, or getting rid of, a sense of guilt,
 and terrible fears and apprehensions that
 there shall be some proper and suitable pun-
 ishment inflicted by the great governor of
 the world.

On the other side; when we act suitably
 to our make, we have hopes that we shall
 receive, from the goodness of the great go-
 vernor of the world, complete felicity.

By all these reflections, we may easily
 be convinced, that we are Beings account-
 able to God, as *governor of the world*; as
 we have capacities and abilities, which
 plainly evidence that we are under a
 law.

II. We find that God does act towards his reasonable creatures, as a governor.

He has attended his laws with proper sanctions; whereby we may form a very easy apprehension of the character, that is here given unto him, as a *Judge*.

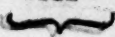
It is certain, that we are under a law, as all intelligent Beings must be. The apostle says of the *Gentiles*, that, when they had no revealed law, there was a law in their frame: their consciences accusing, or excusing them. And, as this is a law to all reasonable Beings, so we shall find, that God gives us sufficient evidence that he stands related to us, as a *moral governor*; not only in that he has plainly discovered to us a law; by which we are to direct our conduct: but, as he has connected with our conformity to this law, or acting contrary to it, proper inforcements. Every one must (if he will reflect at all) feel, that, when he does what becomes him, or what is reasonable or fit, he has all serenity and calmness within. There is no distress, no disturbance of mind; no chagrin, in reflecting upon such a conduct.

But,

But, on the other hand, if we act any SERM.
way disagreeable to reasonable Beings, or XI.
contrary to the law of our intelligent nature, we then find great distress; and a
fear of punishment, from the hand of him,
who is the governor of the world.

But besides, if we will trace this subject
thoroughly, we shall find, that God has
connected every interest, that we can have
in our view, with piety and virtue: and
he has connected, with running counter to
this law of nature, disadvantage, in every
respect; both as to this life, and in refer-
ence to another.

It is certain that health of body, strength
of mind, exactness of judgment, inward
peace, success attending our pursuits of in-
terest in this life, our character and repu-
tation, all stand connected with the steady
and universal practice of that which is a-
greeable to piety and virtue. On the con-
trary, the health of the body is impaired,
the clearness of judgment is lost, and a
stain to reputation follows the exercise, or
practice, of a habit of vice. And thus God
has plainly discovered that he is a governor
of intelligent Beings; and that he does, in
part,

SERM. part, or in some degree, distinguish his sincere votaries, or servants, from those who
 XI.  allow themselves in a course of vice; and act contrary to the law, which he has planted in reasonable nature. For, in order to give us a full conviction, that he does regard virtue and vice; and does distinguish those that practise the one, from those who act quite the contrary; — He has been pleased to connect every prospect of advantage and happiness to the steady practice of the law, that he has placed in our frame: and the contrary to the practice of vice.

III. As we are capable of moral government; and as God has plainly proved that he does act towards us as a governor; and that he will distinguish those, that are his faithful servants, from such as violate his laws; so, in observing the course of divine providence, we shall find that the natural rewards of virtue and the natural punishments of vice are interrupted.

We find, such is the constitution of things now, that what God did design, as motives proper to influence a moral conduct, are broke in upon and infringed. Virtue produces

duces true pleasure; and is designed, by SERM.
the creator, to have connected with it, XI.
every view of interest. And yet, you see, 
that men, who indulge themselves in a
course of vice, are, sometimes, very prof-
perous; and lift up their heads, and be-
have with a great deal of haughtiness of
mind, upon a train of successes, which
have attended them, and have even sprung
from some of their vices.

On the other hand; we see the righte-
ous molested and persecuted, in this world,
or removed from this life and all its enjoy-
ments, by a violent death; merely because
of his steady virtue and piety.

This, indeed, has produced very sad
effects. For it has made some apprehend
that there is *no* God, nor *providence*; or
that God does not take notice, or regard,
what passes in the world: because they see
wickedness attended with success and prof-
perity; and sometimes virtue and piety
persecuted and depressed.

There cannot be a more unjust inference
than this. The true inference is, that there
will be a time, in which these instances of
the divine government, shall all be made

to

SERM. to appear consistent with every perfection
 XI. of the creator and governor of the world.

If he has laid a scheme; and, in part, executes it; in that he has made virtue to be naturally connected with happiness; and vice naturally connected with misery; but, as a governor of moral agents, that are to choose their own conduct, he has left them to their character, as Beings capable of determining and choosing; and, in consequence, there arise many instances, which appear to be inconsistent with, and contrary to, the idea, that we have of his moral character, as a governor:—From hence we may reasonably infer, that there will be another state, and that a state of retribution.

To suppose that God will not distinguish those, that are his faithful servants, in a more equal manner, than appears in the present world, is to suppose, that either he has no concern about the actions of Beings indued with reason; or, that he will certainly, some time or other, observe a day of retribution; and then distinguish, in a more exact manner, his votaries, from those

those that allow themselves in a course of rebellion. SERM. XI.

A finer, or he that is a violator of the divine law, cannot lay aside the fears of this: as, on the contrary, the righteous has hope. For God has discovered himself; by connecting with vice, a fear of the ill consequence; and with virtue, the hope of happy effects. I say, by these, he has plainly shewn his approbation of virtue, and disapprobation of vice. The scene opens then; but not in such a full manner, as is sufficient to remove all the difficulties, that may be raised against the character of God, as a wise, a just, and a good governor.

I know, some are ready to say, "that, if we, at present, find attending virtue much greater good, than what accompanies vice; why may not this be the last scene, and no other to succede it? Will there not be difference enough made, by the divine governor, from the different effects, that spring from virtue or vice?"

Perhaps, a reward, in another state, may not be *due* to *us*, indeed. For we have

SERM. have all sined, and have forfeited any re-

XI.  compensate (properly speaking) at the divine hand. But, then, we must remember, that, tho' it may not be strictly *due* to *men*; it is *due* to the honor of the *Divine perfections*. It is no way consistent with wisdom, justice, and especially with goodness, that God should make no other distinction, or difference, between good and bad men, than appears to be in this world. We may take the pleasure, which arises from virtue. I grant that this is a consequence: and it is highly fit it should be so. But would any one imagine, that a governor was wise, who should give more moments of happiness to a man, that was irregular, and disorderly, and rebellious, than to one that ever had near his heart the interest of his government?

Apply the case, and I think it will stand clear; *Ex. gr.* For God to suffer a tyrant to sacrifice many thousands of innocent lives, to bring about his own ambitious aims; to follow this with a train of successes; and that he should possess all, that is in human power to enjoy; and yet go out of life, without having any great distress

trell attending him: — when a *Socrates* SERM.
shall be a prisoner, and lose his life, for XI.
the sake of his faith and virtue. — I say,

such instances, as these, are not at all agreeable to the character of a wise governor. For it is necessary that a wise governor should make a balance of misery, to turn against sinners; and a balance of happiness, in favor of such as are sincerely pious and virtuous. To do the contrary, does not appear to be agreeable to the character of God, as *just*. For *justice*, applied to a lawgiver, is, a distributing, in an exact proportion, either rewards or punishments.

Now we see, in this world, instances, that are contrary to this exact rewarding or punishing. This is, therefore, the consequence; that, since God is a just governor, and this is not sufficiently evident, in the course of his government of this world; there must be a time, in which he will manifest this to be his character, *viz.* that he is as well a wife, and a just governor, as a good one.

SERM. So that, I think, from this reflection;
 XI. it will appear highly probable, at least,
 that there must be a day, in which those
 things, which seem, now, to run cross to
 the divine character, as a *governor*, shall be
 set to rights; and it shall be made appear,
 before angels and men, that the great go-
 vernor of the world is wise, and just, and
 good.

That God has connected to virtue, hap-
 piness; to vice, misery; plainly shows
 him to be an excellent moral governor.
 And, that this connection is, at present,
 broken in upon, or interrupted, by the
 vices of men, as plainly points out to us a
 future state of rewards and punishments;
 where God will vindicate the honor of his
 most excellent moral government; and
 make the connection of virtue with happi-
 ness, and of vice with misery, universal,
 uninterrupted, and everlasting.

IV. Since this appears, so far, by the
 light of nature, let us see what is offered
 to us, upon this head, in the last and
 most perfect revelation, which God has
 made

made of his will to us by his son. We SERM.
 are there taught, that God will judge the XI.
 world, in righteousness, by the man Christ
Jesus. This, I think, appears to be,
 every way, agreeable to the best senti-
 ments, which we can form of God. *The*
word (by whom the Father made the
 worlds) became flesh; exactly complied
 with the will of his father; was obedient
 to death; and, therefore, the Father rais-
 ed him from the dead; and gave him all
 power, both in heaven and earth. And
 he tells us, by him, that he judges no
 man; but that all men shall be judged by
 the word-incarnate; who is, now, at the
 right-hand of the Father.

There is nothing at all that appears con-
 trary, or inconsistent, to *reason*, in this
 view. For he was sent by the Father.
 And, as he fulfilled all righteousness, the
 Father, by him, will judge the world.
 This was a reward conferred upon him, in
 consequence of his obedience unto death.
 A connection hereby is conspicuously seen
 between obedience and reward.

And farther: this is highly fit; because
 we shall be judged by one, at the right-

SERM. hand of the Father, who partook of our

XI. nature. Certain it is, that this carries, in it, a very strong motive to influence and engage us to obedience to his law; I mean *the gospel*, by which Christians are to be judged.

The scripture represents to us, that there will be a general day, in which all shall appear; and have sentence pronounced; either of distress, from the presence of the Lord; or of eternal life; just as their different characters are conspicuous.

The light of nature, or reason, will prove, in a very probable way, that there is to be a day of retribution: but the light of nature would not so easily discover the circumstances, in which this great transaction shall be performed. *Revelation* comes in aid; and tells us, "That all the Dead shall rise; and that they shall stand before the tribunal of him, whom the Father has appointed to be *the judge*."

The scripture has told us distinctly, what *the law* is, by which the transactions of that awful day shall be directed. Those, that are not under the law of *revelation*, shall be judged by the law, that is in their reason-

reasonable make and frame: but those, SERM.
 who have lived in the light of revelation, XI.
 shall be judged thereby. ~

Revelation has taught us, not only the solemnity of the day, and set before us some circumstances, which, if attended to, must have very considerable weight, to induce us to believe: but it has added a clear and full representation of the rewards, as well as of the punishments. It has assured us, that those, who shall rise as the sincere disciples of *Christ*, shall be taken to be forever where *Christ* is, and shall receive an interminable happiness from him. They shall never more be called forth to a state of trial. I do not say but that the highest intelligent Beings, that are created, must have a possibility of using all the powers, which they have: but there will be a moral impossibility of their doing so. All the temptations of the present state, and every thing difficult, in the practice of virtue, will be removed: and they shall have their powers enlarged; and objects to entertain those powers shall be granted them. And they shall have a rule of action, that shall so transform them into the likeness of the

SERM. moral character of *Deity*, that they shall

XI. be holy as he is holy; and shall be possessed of such happiness, as to render it hardly possible that there should be any temptations strong enough to take them off, or seduce them, from their steady allegiance unto God.

On the other hand, the wicked shall be sentenced to *the second death*; to *everlasting fire*; to the *worm that dieth not*; to *destruction from the presence of the Lord*. These are the figurative expressions, which are made use of, in the sacred writings: and which, at least, must import such punishment, as is proper to set the perfections of the great governor of the world in a clear and full light, before angels and men. And, in this view of things, there is no inconsistency to the light, which we receive from our natural sentiments. And, as there is nothing inconsistent, there is something implied in these circumstances, that is suited to our state. We are conversing in a world of sensible objects, which so much attach our powers to the things of sense, that we can hardly raise our minds to think abstractly of the perfections of the governor

governor of the world; and of a future SERM.
state of retribution. It is, therefore, high- .XI.
ly fit, and congruous to the consummate
wisdom of God, that he should set before
us rewards and punishments, with such
circumstances, which are of the last con-
sequence; to attract our attention, and to
fix our thoughts, so as to be superior to
that power and influence, which sensible
objects generally have.

V. I shall now conclude, by making
practical remarks.

I. We may, certainly, here see the ex-
treme folly of ridiculing religion and the
principles of it.

Let us take what methods we please,
the nature of things is pretty obstinate and
inflexible. And, if we leave out the
consideration of another world, and do
not attend to the character of God, as a
judge; this will not, at all, prevent our be-
ing called to an account, and our re-
ceiving sentence of everlasting death, and
destruction from the presence of the
Lord.

R 3

It

SERMON. It is better, then, to consider, whether

XI. it is not worth while coolly to debate this principle in our minds. It is a matter of moment. You will grant me *that*. Nay, you must allow it to be of the utmost importance to consider, how you shall stand at the great day? Whether in the favor of God? or fall under the effects of his displeasure? And supposing that you had not such strong evidence (as there appears to some, to be) yet the very importance of this, is such, as should excite every person to calculate. We find persons extremely careful, in regulating their affairs in this life; and deliberating "whether, if they should take such a step, it will turn to account?" Well! did you never take this method, with regard to things that are spiritual? Did you never call to your thoughts, the powers, which you are indued with? nor consider, that you are to give an account of your actions to the great governor of the world? And did you never fear him? Have you had no anguish of mind, at any time? Did you never doubt whether it may be so, or not? And yet the argument is such, that we
 canno

cannot suppose that God is wise, and just, SERM.
and good; and of such perfections, as *rea-* XI.
son obliges us to conceive of him; if things
are suffered to go on, as they appear at
present; without making a thorough dis-
tinction, or difference, between the
righteous and the wicked?

If you do not believe *revelation*; ex-
amine it upon the foot of *reason*. And,
after you have calculated and balanced the
methods of reasoning, about the grand ar-
gument; then take in *revelation*; and see,
whether there is any thing added to this
argument, that is at all inconsistent with
that which, by *the light of nature*, appears
to be the truth of the case? And whether
revelation has not added what is of great
force and weight, if attended to, to in-
fluence and ingage us to the practice of
sincere piety and extensive virtue?

It is surprizing to me, I must confess,
to see the world mighty diligent to make a
calculation about their temporal affairs:
and yet never regard, at all, any of the
perfections, of the *Divine Being*; nor at-
tend to his government; nor ever seriously

SERM. consider the difference, that he makes, here,

XI. betwixt good and evil; and whether that difference is sufficient to vindicate all his perfections; without seeing a fitness that there should be a day of retribution! Let us act, in affairs that relate to our conscious principle, with as much care and concern, as we evidently express about affairs here. In a little time, the last will have an end; and, at present, they give no full satisfaction.

I design not to take off your care for this world. I would only show, that you should be as solicitous to make a right calculation about the interest of your conscious principle; and the relation you stand in to God, and another world; as you are, about the concerns of this life, which soon passes away.

2. I would here remark, that there appears nothing in the *Christian Revelation*, that is inconsistent, or contrary, to the known principles of *natural religion*: but that the principles in *revelation* are designed, and intended, to carry on the principles and practice of *the light of nature* and
of

of *reason*: and it has, therefore, added SERM.
such circumstances, as are proper and fit XI.
to give them greater weight and influ-
ence.

3. Be prevailed upon, often to trace, in
your thoughts, the character of God, as
a judge: This is an attribute, that plainly must be
ascribed to him; and it is a matter there-
fore, of considerable moment, that we
attend to it; and seriously reflect. Cer-
tainly, he will judge the world; but in
exact righteousness. For no power can
prevent our being judged by him;—*a*
Being, who will not be bias'd by favor,
or partial respects. He will certainly judge
without respect of persons; and in exact
proportion to equity. Those, that have
been remarkably holy, shall have distin-
guished rewards; and those, that have been
eminently vitious, shall have a punish-
ment that will exactly sute the malignity of
their temper and conduct.

Let us, therefore, by this, be led to
express a care to settle in our minds, *the*
law, by which we shall be judged; and
to have a constant concern to conform, in
temper

SERM. temper and life, to that which we know

XI. will be the rule of our being judged, at last. We have a knowledge of the laws of God; and we cannot doubt but, that he, who is of a perfect moral character, will reward such as respect him; and punish those that have been rebellious, and have acted the reverse to that moral character; the attainment of which is the perfection and happiness of reasonable Beings.

4. *Lastly*, Whatever injuries we meet with, in this world, let us bear them with patience.

This is a state, wherein we are only *Strangers and Pilgrims*. This is not our native home. Therefore, whatever befalls us, here, let us remember, that all will be set to rights, by the righteous judge. It does not become us to condemn the esteem of our fellow-creatures; neither are we to be sunk, or depressed, by any unrighteous, or unequal, treatment, that we may meet with. But we must remember, that God will, by his son, judge the world: and that then the righteousness of the good shall shine as the sun; and the wickedness of the wicked shall be set in the strongest light.

of all.

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light. This is that, which should support ^{SERM.}
us, thro' all the difficulties and trials, that ^{XI.}
may arise, from our fellow-creatures; }
while we are passing thro' this world.
The day is coming, when, if we are
found sincerely pious and virtuous, we
shall be rewarded, with an inheritance,
that is incorruptible, and undefiled, and
that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven
for us.



S E R-

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 us, thro' all the difficulties and trials that
 may arise from our fellow-creatures;
 while we are passing thro' this world.
 The day is coming, when, if we are
 found sincerely pious and virtuous, we
 shall be rewarded, with an inheritance,
 that is incorruptible, and undecaying, and
 that fadeeth not away, reserved in heaven
 for us.





S E R M O N XII.

G O D, incomprehensible.



J O B xi. 7.

*Canst thou, by searching, find out
G O D ? Canst thou find out the
Almighty unto perfection ?*



N a former discourse, we S E R M.
have shown, that G O D ex- XII.
ercises a moral government,

over the Beings, which he
has indued with reasonable
powers. And, in as much as it appears to
be the design of his government, that those,
who are truly pious and virtuous, shall
finally be happy ; and that those, who are
wicked, shall, in the end, be unhappy,
or miserable ; and, since we find, by the
most careful observation, that this design
of

SERM. of GOD is interrupted, and broken in up-

XII: on, by men, whom he has made agents; and in such a degree, as that there is not a sufficient vindication of his character, as a wise, a just, and a good governor, as things at present stand;— it must follow, that there is a day, in which he, as *a judge*, will, with great exactness, proportionably distribute rewards and punishments.

The last divine attribute, that comes under our consideration, is, that God is not capable of being comprehended by any of his intelligent creatures.

The words, which we have read, will give us a just foundation of treating upon this attribute. *Canst thou, by searching, find out God; i. e. to perfection? Canst thou find out the Almighty; so as to have an adequate idea of him; and of the excellencies, which are to be ascribed to him?*

This question, undoubtedly, implies, *that God is incomprehensible*: or, that he cannot be fully taken in, by any finite understanding.

In

God, incomprehensible.

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In treating upon this subject, I shall,

SERM.

XII.

I. Explain this attribute.

II. Prove that it is an attribute of God.

III. I shall set before you, the ground, upon which this attribute is built. And then,

IV. Make practical remarks.

I. I shall endeavor to explain this attribute.

Nothing is more plain than the existence of Deity. In him, we live, and move; and he is not far from any one of us. The apostle remarks, that, by the things which are seen, we come to a clear knowledge of the power of the Deity; of him, who is the first, independent, original Being. But, notwithstanding this, it is asserted, that we cannot know what is God; or, in so complete a manner, as to say, that *This is God*; and there is nothing that is in him, that is dark or obscure.

But, I think, the explication of this will better appear, by illustrations.

I. We

SERM. I. We cannot comprehend the essence,
XII. or nature, of GOD.

~~~~~ Job xxxvi. 26. Behold GOD is great,  
and we know him not. Job xxxvii. 23.  
Touching the Almighty, we cannot find him  
out. He is excellent in power, and in judg-  
ment, and in plenty of justice. Ps. cxlv. 3.  
Great is the Lord, and greatly to be praised;  
and his greatness is unsearchable. M. VI

It is no surprize, to any considerate per-  
son, that GOD cannot be searched out, to  
perfection, in regard to his *essence*. For  
the nature of things, that we are most in-  
timately conversant with, are hid from us.  
Our knowlege is superficial. We know  
only a few properties; but what the nature  
of that Being is, in which those properties  
exist, is quite out of our view. And we  
may, therefore, reason from the less to the  
greater; viz. that, if we do not know the  
nature of the Beings around us, how can  
we enter into a perfect idea of *the nature*  
*of GOD?*

2. *His attributes* are beyond our pow-  
ers to trace out to perfection.



As to his immensity. 2 Chron. vi. 18. SERM.  
Behold heaven, and the heaven of heavens XII.  
cannot contain him. There is no escaping  
his presence. If we should take the wings  
of the morning, he would overtake us.  
For he is every-where present.

GOD must be conceived by us, as filling  
infinite space; and as not circumscribed,  
or bounded, by any place, or space: but  
then, how to enter into a comprehensive  
knowledge of this, is, undoubtedly, beyond  
the reach of our faculties.

It is certain that GOD never had a be-  
ginning. *From everlasting to everlasting he*  
*is GOD.* And yet, who can frame an  
adequate and complete notion of a Being,  
that is self-existent, or that exists without  
beginning, and without any efficient cause  
at all? It is evident that this attribute of  
*eternity* may easily be proved to belong to  
GOD; but the manner of conceiving it, is  
that, which is quite beyond the reach and  
compass of our faculties. And, indeed,  
who can form a perfect idea of GOD's un-  
derstanding? It is infinite, as the *Psalmist*  
expresses it, *Pf. cxlvii. 5. Great is our*  
*Lord, and of great power: his understand-*

SERM. *ing is infinite.* And, therefore, we find  
 XII. the apostle *Paul* breaks out, in the highest  
 admiration, *Rom. xi. 33, &c.* *O the depth*

*of the riches, both of the wisdom and know-  
 ledge of GOD! How unsearchable are his  
 judgments, and his ways past finding out?  
 For who hath known the mind of the Lord?  
 Or who hath been his counsellor?*

As his knowledge, wisdom, and power,  
 are expressed, in such an infinite variety of  
 Beings, there is no mind can fully com-  
 prehend them. — Which leads me, to  
 observe,

3. That the works of GOD are incapable  
 of being found out, to perfection, by us.  
*Job v. 9, &c.* *GOD does great things and un-  
 searchable: marvellous things without number.  
 Who giveth rain upon the earth, and send-  
 eth waters upon the fields: To set up on high  
 those that be low; that those, who mourn,  
 may be exalted in safety. Job xxvi. 14.)  
 Lo, these are parts of his ways; and how  
 little a portion is heard of him? But the  
 thunder of his power who can understand?  
*Job xxxvii. 16, 17, 18.* *Dost thou know the  
 balancings of the clouds? the wondrous works  
 of him, who is perfect in knowledge? How thy  
 garments**

garments are warm, when he quieteth the SERM.  
earth, by the south wind? Hast thou, with him, **XII.**  
spread out the sky, which is strong, and  
as a molten looking-glass? Here Job ascribed  
to divine providence such instances of pow-  
er and wisdom, as our finite understandings  
cannot reach.

And, if we consider any thing, that is  
around us, we shall soon puzzle ourselves;  
and be led to own, that the creator, pre-  
server, and governor of them, is of such  
perfections, as that our finite minds cannot  
fully comprehend all that he does. How  
comes it to pass, that one body, at a vast  
distance from another, shall attract? Or  
how come some things to be soft and o-  
thers hard? And some, again, in degrees  
of hardness to go beyond others? And yet  
it is as evident as can be, that, if there  
was this cohesion in all parts equally, all  
the furniture of this world, would be of  
very little service and benefit to mankind.  
What, then, is the cement? How do  
things combine together, in so wise and  
skilful a manner? We need not go out of  
ourselves for instances of the divine skill,  
that cannot be in our power, or in the

SERM. power of any man, to give a plain and

XII. easy account of. That I can, by a deter-

mination of my will, move my body, is what all the philosophers own to be incapable of being explained, and set in a due light. How is it, when I determine, that there should such a number of muscles be so swelled, and others laxative, to execute the determination of my will? that things should so come to pass;—when the motion of these muscles is not at all in the power of that nature, which determines their actions? What is it, that (somewhat like attraction) occasions an union between our conscious principle and the organized body, to which it is united? We are no more capable of explaining this, than we are of giving a clear account of our own rise, or of the origin of our own souls; whether we descended from our parents? or whether we existed in a former state? or whether God made us immediately? There are difficulties attending each; and there are some probabilities. Such is our darkness, that we know but little of ourselves. And, surely, we must easily see, then, that it is no surprize at all,



all, that we cannot comprehend *that great Being*, who is infinite in every perfection. SERM.  
XII.

III. Let us, now, consider the ground, upon which *this attribute* is founded.

It is founded upon the disproportion, which there is, between a finite understanding, or mind, and an infinite. And, therefore, when *Job* says here, *Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?* it does extend, not only to men, but to *angels*. The highest order of intelligent Beings cannot perfectly trace the nature and properties of God: I say, they cannot adequately know the divine nature, or essence. You may as well imagine that a small line can be commensurate to an infinite; as to think that a finite understanding can bear an adequate proportion to a Being, that is infinite. It is much easier to conceive, that we could comprehend the ocean in the hollow of our hands: or, that we could measure with a small line, the distances of the various worlds, which God has made; as to think, that we can, by the utmost reach of our

SERM. thoughts, come to a perfect and adequate

XII. knowlege of GOD and his perfections.

Having thus explained and proved this attribute; and given you reasons why *Deity* must be *incomprehensible*: I shall,

IV. Conclude, by making practical remarks.

I. Let us take care that we do not deceive ourselves, or are imposed on by others, with a wrong view of *this attribute of God*.

A very considerable man, some years ago, printed a piece, in which he would endeavor to prove, not only that our notions of God are inadequate; but that there is nothing in our ideas, which corresponds to *the perfections of God*. This was advanced; and, I believe, without any ill design. But the consequence of this, is, that there can be no religion. For, if our notions of God are not true; why are we called upon to imitate him? Why does the philosopher place virtue in an assimilation, or likeness, to the divine perfection? Or the scriptures say, *Be ye holy; for I, the Lord,*  
your

your GOD, *am holy*? Can we cultivate a re-  
 semblance of that, which we have no idea  
 of? This, therefore, intirely destroys the  
 principle, upon which that book was  
 founded.

SERM.  
 XII.

But then, we shall find, perhaps, in  
 ourselves, and probably in others, a dis-  
 position to defend some hypothesis, which  
 has been taken up, by seeing that GOD is  
*unsearchable, and his ways past finding out.*  
 Whatever, therefore, is offered, under this  
 color, to defend what implies a contradic-  
 tion, is not to be received. And we have  
 a just foundation to reject every thing,  
 which carries in it, or implies, a contra-  
 diction; though, at the same time, we  
 must own, that GOD is *incomprehensible.*

I am satisfied, many here have known  
 how artfully this has been done, to favor  
 some wrong hypothesis of GOD. They  
 tell us, with great plausibility, *that GOD*  
*cannot be found out to perfection:* and  
 therefore, they would have us take up  
 with their notions, concerning GOD;  
 which are absurd and inconsistent to the  
 ideas that we justly have of GOD.

SERM. The ideas, which we carefully form;

XII. of GOD, by *reason* and *revelation*, may  
 be depended upon; tho' they are not  
 complete, or adequate; and, tho' we cannot say, *We know GOD to perfection*. For instance, if any should apprehend that he cannot explain the dependence of creatures upon GOD, without saying, *that GOD concurs to every act: And therefore he is the author of sin*: it might be answered, that this is not the consequence. And, how can such a perfect Being, who is sovereign of all, design the misery of the greatest number of his creatures? and fix on the fewest, to make them happy? I say, such an application of this great truth, *that GOD is incomprehensible*, is intirely wrong; because it is applying it to support a point of speculation, which is easily seen to be inconsistent with the perfections of GOD. Now, whatever appears inconsistent to the divine perfections, cannot justly be received, or entertained.

Suppose any should apprehend GOD as a Being implacable, without the interposition of his son; and argue upon this, "that we cannot so readily attain perfect  
 " ideas



“ ideas of God; and that the scheme, SERM.

“ which he has formed, is darkly seen by XII.

“ us: but the whole is not known.” And  
so, by this false reasoning, would make  
others believe what is directly opposite, or  
inconsistent, to true notions of the divine  
perfections:— Such reasoning deserves  
no regard.

We should take great care not to im-  
pose upon ourselves, in attempting to sup-  
port an hypothesis, which we may have  
taken up too rashly; and for which we  
may have great fondness. And we should,  
likewise, be upon our guard, that others  
may not impose upon us, by an artful abuse  
of *this attribute of Deity*.

2. Let us be led to express the highest  
veneration of that Being, whose nature  
and perfections we cannot fully compre-  
hend.

This is an humility, that we owe to  
God, the first, all-perfect mind. We  
may silently adore what we cannot, in  
words, fully express; or, in thoughts,  
perfectly conceive. This, all pious men  
have practised, both under the Old Testa-  
ment, and under the dispensation of the  
New.

SERM. New. When *David* contemplated the  
 XII. greatness of the works of God, and was  
 far from taking a complete view of them,  
 he says, *O Lord, how manifold are thy  
 works? In wisdom hast thou made them all!*  
 So you see *St. Paul* breaks out, in the  
 highest admiration of the *knowledge* and  
*wisdom* of God, discovered in the various  
 dispensations of *reveled religion*, *Rom.*  
*xi. 33, &c.*

This, I think, is decent, and becoming  
 us: and, of consequence, our duty; to  
 contemplate the perfections of God, as  
 discovered in his works and government.  
 And, when we are complete in hea-  
 ven, we shall then express our highest  
 adoration and veneration of that Being.

3. From *this attribute* of God, we  
 may infer how much reason those, that  
 are most improved in their *knowledge* of  
 God, have to walk *humbly* with him.

Nothing would hide pride more from men,  
 than contemplating the *unsearchableness* of  
 the divine perfections. When we see a man  
 puffed up by a little distinguished *knowledge*,  
 we cannot but have a very great contempt  
 of him; when we trace in our minds,  
 how

how unsearchable God is, in all his works. SERM.

Surely; nothing can be more weak than XII.

for a man to compare himself with those only that are below him. But, if he

would be abased, in a right manner, he

should consider the *Divine Being* and his

perfections. "I am but of yesterday;

"He is from everlasting. I have but a

"part of existence; or exist in a small

"part of space; he is immense. The

"knowledge, which I have, is dark and

"obscure, and I cannot view one thing

"all around: He has intimate knowledge

"of the essences of all things; and he is

"present to every thing: for he made

"them all."

By this way of thinking, we should pass through this world with greater modesty of conduct and behavior to others. And this would be of vast advantage. For, by this, we should be cured of impatience, under any difficulties, or sufferings, with which the great governor of the world may think proper to try us; and thereby be content with our state. A very difficult duty! What am I? A little speck, compared

SERM. compared with the whole universe? Must

XII. I think the creator is to look upon me, in so distinguished a manner? And can I be offended at him, that places me in such a suffering state? a state, perhaps, less honorable, than that, in which he places others? It is want of thought, which makes people impatient under sufferings, and discontent in every state. Certain it is, that the more we view God, as a Being *unsearchable*, and that cannot be traced out to perfection, the more we shall be ready to submit to the providence of our heavenly father; and the more we shall find ourselves disposed and resigned to his conduct; and to acquiesce in his government of his own world. We shall not break out in reflections on God and his government.

You see, then, what use we are to make of *this attribute of God*.

4. This should make us look on the end of all circumstances, of a public and private nature, with serenity and calmness of mind.

God



GOD, who is the governor of the world, SERM.  
XII.  
has infinite knowlege; and he does direct, and will support, those that are his servants, under every difficulty. And, indeed, there is not a greater weakness, than that a good man (when darkness surrounds him) should be disposed to despair; as if his shallow views were the proper way for him to judge of things by. We see the wisdom of God acts in such a manner, that, when there are circumstances, that are apt to occasion despair in finite minds, there is sometimes an unexpected deliverance wrought. We must, therefore, leave things to his direction and government; whose perfections are infinite, and not capable of being found out by us intirely.

Give me leave only to instance in one thing: *Angels* knew very well, when the *Logos* (or word) quitted the glory, which he had with his Father; and appeared in flesh. It must be surprizing to *Angels*, who did not fully comprehend the plan, which was formed by him, whose knowlege and wisdom

SERM. wisdom are unbounded. And, when they

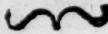
XII. saw this great person suffer and die, and all nature appear in mourning; the earth shaking; and that darkness invaded the land of *Judea*; without doubt, this must be astonishing to *Angels*. But how soon was this darkness dispelled; and made to disappear and vanish; when the *Logos* (or word) rose from the dead? and when he was advanced to all power and dignity, at the right-hand of the Father?

5. We may infer, from *the incomprehensibility* of the divine perfections, that we can never be in such distress, as not to form an hope, or expectation, from that Being, whose power is uncontrollable, and whose wisdom is unbounded.

6. *Lastly*. From *this incomprehensibility* of God, we may infer that it is proper and becoming us, in our speculations of *Deity*, to take care, that we do not exceed the narrow limits of our own understandings.

I would not, by this, discourage any from the pursuit of attaining the best, and clearest, and most perfect notions of *the Divine Being*, which they can attain:  
but,

but, then, we must procede with great SERM.  
humility and caution. We must remem- XII.

ber, that we are in the pursuit of what   
can never be fully comprehended. We  
must, therefore, procede with great care,  
and reverence of *Deity*, and veneration of  
his works. We should indeavor to find  
him out, in his works. This is a charac-  
ter, that gives persons an amiableness, when  
their works praise them. Now *the works*  
*of the Lord are wonderful ; sought out with*  
*pleasure, by all those, that have the highest*  
*reverence of the Divine Being, and of his*  
*perfections.*

But, then, we must take care to do it,  
in such a way (as becomes Beings limited  
in their powers) with the utmost caution  
and care ; and express ourselves concerning  
God, in such a manner, as to be extreme-  
ly careful to avoid what is unbecoming a  
creature to express concerning a Being,  
that is *unsearchable, and cannot be found out*  
*to perfection.*

but then, we must proceed with great  
humility and caution. We must remember

that, that we are in the pursuit of what

can never be fully comprehended. We

must, therefore, proceed with great care

and reverence of God, and veneration of

his works. We should endeavor to find

him out, in his works. This is a charac-

ter, that gives persons an angelic, when

their works praise them. Now the way

of the Lord are wonderful. Light and dark-

ness, by all those, that have the highest

revelance of the Divine Being, and of his

perfections.

But, if we must take care to do it

in such a way (as become) beings limited

in their powers) with the utmost caution

and care; and express ourselves concerning

God, in such a manner, as to be extreme-

ly careful to avoid what is unbecoming a

creature to express concerning a Being,

that is adorable, and cannot be feared and

is perfect.





## S E R M O N XIII.

The concluding sermon, upon the  
Attributes.



P R O V. ix. 10.

— *And the knowlege of the holy,  
is understanding.*



HE whole verse is, *The* **SERM.**  
*fear of the Lord, is the* **XIII.**  
*begining of wisdom; and*  
*the knowlege of the holy is*  
*understanding.*

I have proposed to treat  
upon the principles of *natural and reveled*  
*religion.*

*The Being of a GOD is, by all, allowed*  
*to be the first principle, upon which all*  
*others depend.*

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The

SERM. The next principle to the existence of  
 XIII. God, is, the properties and attributes,  
 which are to be ascribed to him.

In treating upon these, we have proposed the following method,

I. To lay down rules, by which we may be directed, in forming right apprehensions of God.

II. To give you a general sketch of the properties, or attributes, of God.

III. To treat upon each attribute distinctly.

All these I have finished: and now come, in the LAST PLACE, to shew you the importance of this part of divine knowledge.

The words, which I have read, will easily be discerned by every one, as a proper ground of this argument: *The knowledge of the holy is understanding.*

I shall, with as much clearness as I can, represent to you the importance and advantage of forming right apprehensions of Deity.

I. From

1. From right apprehensions of God SERM.  
and his *attributes*, we come to a certainty, that we may depend upon a right and proper use of our powers. XIII.

When we reflect, we shall find, by the order, which appears, in the frame of this world, that there is a first, intelligent, all-perfect Being. But still, a man given to scepticism, may say, "Am I capable of depending upon these powers? Do not my own senses deceive me? And am I certain, that the reasonings of my mind are clear, and founded upon a proper basis?"

We might here go on, in doubting: but, when we consider, that the first cause, who has given us these powers, is a Being, that cannot be imposed upon, himself; and will not deceive the creatures, that he has made; we come at a principle, which does ascertain to us, that, if we express a due care to direct our powers aright, we may, by them, attain certain truths.

2. From right sentiments, that we are capable of forming of God, we have a rule, which we may depend upon, to judge whatever comes to us, with a pretension

SERM. of being *a revelation*, whether it is true  
XIII. or false.

This is an advantage of the last consequence to us. No one, but must observe, that, in every age, there have appeared some pretensions to *revelation*. "Which way shall I, then, judge, whether the pretension arises only from the heat of imagination? or from the *Divine Being*?" Without right and proper sentiments of God, we have no certain rule, by which we can determine, whether what pretends to be *a revelation*, is really from God, or not.

When any pretensions are made to *revelation*, I am sure, that, if it be *a divine revelation*, it carries in it marks and characters of the first Being, from whom it took its rise. In as much, therefore, as this is to be *a criterion*, I must attain right sentiments of *Deity*, and of *his attributes*; or I cannot form a right judgment. If any writings come with a pretension of containing *a divine revelation*, we have reason to think that there will appear, in such *revelation*, a consistency; and that it will all be agreeable to *the attributes of God*.



GOD. There will be marks of knowledge, SERM.  
wisdom, power, and holiness. And there XIII.  
can be nothing, in a *true revelation*, that  
carries in it any inconsistency, or contra-  
diction, to the clear notices, that *reason*,  
truly cultivated, will impart, of the di-  
vine excellencies.

There has been of late a dispute, "Whe-  
" ther any thing, that is positive; *i. e.*  
" that is not good, before it is command-  
" ed, can be a part of *revelation*?" The  
answer to this, I think, is plain; and will  
arise from right apprehensions of *Deity*.  
*A Revelation*, that has nothing recom-  
mended in it, but what is *positive*, cannot  
have in it such evidences, as might be ex-  
pected, of its being a *revelation from God*.  
But, when *this revelation* appears to be  
intended to produce a resemblance of God,  
in his moral perfections: and, when there  
is nothing in it recommended, that is po-  
sitive, but what is a proper mean (all cir-  
cumstances of the case considered) to ef-  
fect and accomplish this resemblance of  
*Deity*; we have, then, a very strong rea-  
son and argument to entertain such a *reve-*  
*lation*. It is, however, plain, that our  
sentiments of God must be formed with

SERM. care, in order to give us a capacity of rea-

XIII. soning upon what comes from God.

If it be of any importance, upon a supposition of God's having made known his will, that we have some *Criterion*, by which we may judge, whether it is a *revelation* from God, or not; and that this *Criterion* is a right apprehension of the *Divine Being*; it will follow, with clearness, that expressing a care to entertain right notions of *the attributes of God*, is of the last importance, in order to prevent our being deceived by false pretensions of a *revelation*; and by which, we become capable of examining *a true revelation*.

3. This knowledge of *the attributes of God* is of great moment, in order to settle in our minds a clear notion of what is *essential* in religion; and the importance of the different duties, which are enjoined by *revelation*.

The want of this has been the spring and source of very great mistakes, in every age. What makes us like to God must, certainly, be most essential in religion. The wise philosophers did justly say, "That an assimilation to *the Gods*, or a  
"resemblance of them, was of the last  
"confe-

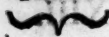
"consequence." And they placed true SERM.  
philosophy in a likeness unto the *Deities*. XIII.

It appears very plain that, by right notions of *Deity*, we are capable of seeing what will recommend us to his favor; and what will expose us to his resentment. And we come, by right notions of *Deity*, to know what it is that will secure to us his kind regards. He is a moral agent; and the rule of his own determinations and actions is what is right and fit. And we must conceive of GOD, that he is of a perfect moral character: and, of consequence, the object of our highest love. Whoever, therefore, pretends to please GOD, by external severities; by fastings, and scourging themselves; or by putting their bodies into one posture, for years together; I say, whoever judges in that manner, must enter into these mistaken sentiments, from wrong apprehensions of GOD. It is, indeed, impossible that any man should think this way; unless he has mistaken sentiments of the first, all-perfect mind. He must easily see, that, if he resembles GOD, he must stand well with him; and must regard GOD, as disposed to impart happiness to him.

*The concluding sermon,*

SERM.

XIII.



He that acts by the same rule, by which the *Divine Being* acts, must certainly see, that he is doing that, which (as it is most perfect) is attended with secure expectations of the favor and protection of heaven. And it is very clear, that all, that is *positive*, even in a true revelation, is no other than a mean to bring us to this moral character. And, unless that design, or end, is answered, the external part is of no avail; is not at all pleasing, or acceptable, to God. So that we may easily know what is most essential in true religion. That, which is of the last importance in true religion, is *the image of God*, resembling him in his moral character. And pray; wherein does the moral character of God consist? This we treated largely upon, when we discoursed upon the attributes of God, *truth, faithfulness, justice, equity, beneficence, and goodness*; and the two branches of goodness, *mercy and patience*. If, by these characters, we see what *Divines* mean by the moral perfections of God, we may easily observe that a resemblance of him, in these characters, must be of the last importance, and



and most essential in religion. And we SERM.  
may, from hence, easily see what is con- XIII.  
trary to true religion. If *truth, faithfulness, justice, goodness, mercy and patience*, are the perfections of God; and, when we conform to them, we are brought to a resemblance of him; then, what is contrary to this, must render us the objects of his displeasure. Falseness, and unfaithfulness to our words; unrighteousness; acting too rigorously, where the case requires equity; and cruelty and oppression; must be directly opposite to what is essential in religion.

4. From a right *knowledge of God*, we may easily see, that there is nothing more contrary to right sentiments, than to use expressions, that shall deprectate the preaching up, and practising, moral virtue.

What? Is not God an all-perfect moral agent? Are not his perfections such, as that he must love that, which is right and fit? and hate the reverse? Can we ever, with any grace, deprectate that, which stands so necessarily connected with a right idea of God?

I would

SERM.

XIII.

I would not be mistaken. Some have a very imperfect notion of *Morality*: and they think, it consists only in acting what relates to *meum* and *tuum*; or in respect to present property and interest. I can hardly call this *Morality*. For, to constitute what is *moral*, it is necessary that I see, that it is fit and reasonable; and the will of God, who is the first and highest reason; and that it is of such extensiveness, as to take in all actions, and to include all obligations, that are founded upon fitness, whether referring to God, or *others*, or *ourselves*. And, taking it in this view, undoubtedly there is nothing can be more absurd, than to say any thing, that shall lessen the discoursing upon that, which must be the last end and ultimate design of any *revelation*, that comes from heaven.

If there should come any *revelation*, or any pretension to a revelation, from God, that did relax the obligation of performing what will make me like to him, who is perfectly moral; I could not, by right reasoning, entertain that, as a *true revelation*: but must discard and reject it. And it is

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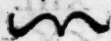
surprising that any Christian should ever, SERM.  
in any expression, lessen that, without XIII.  
which he is not able to distinguish a true  
revelation from a false one.

I am satisfied, this is never done, by  
any intelligent Christian, unless they affix  
a different idea to the term, *moral*. To  
be sure, when we are called to be *holy as*  
*God is holy*; the meaning is, be you true,  
faithful, righteous, and beneficent; as God  
is true, and faithful, righteous, and be-  
neficent. Every religion,—the religion of  
nature, the religion of *Moses*, and the religion  
*Christ*, call upon their votaries to resemble  
*Deity*. And, in the Christian religion, we  
are exhorted to be kind and beneficent, in  
the same extent, as God exercises his good-  
ness. For he causes his sun to rise upon the  
good and upon the bad, and sendeth rain  
upon the just and unjust.

You see, then, how weak it is for any  
to apprehend, that discoursing upon *mora-*  
*lity*; and the grounds and reasons, upon  
which it is to be founded and built; and  
the motives, upon which that is to be  
pressed, by which we may resemble  
God;

SERM. GOD; is not preaching the Christian religion: — when the preaching of these things, is preaching what is most essential in it: and is endeavoring to take persons off from building their hopes upon a sandy foundation.

XIII.



5. *A true knowledge of God is the best security against superstition.*

Whoever takes a survey of the history of mankind, in every age, will, to his surprise, find, that a very considerable part of men have been, and are, engaged in those things, which they suppose to be of importance in religion; but which are no other than *gross Superstition*; neither making them, who practise it, better; or others, whom they converse with, more happy. There is a great deal of what is called *religion*, which the world might want; and no ill effects arise. I know some very happy consequences would follow upon its being removed. How comes it that we have so many persons, who have placed religion in washings, in purifyings, in severities, and fastings? Whence do these superstitions arise? How is it that you have had so many substitutes? and some very low ones, not fit to be named? Why,  
it



It is because persons do not express a care, by their intellectual powers, to attain just and right sentiments of *Deity*. SERM.  
XIII.

Could any one ever imagine, that he could recommend himself to the *Divine* favor, by any thing, that is merely external and ritual; if he considered God as a *spirit*; as a Being, that is perfectly holy? It is impossible for such, as take care to entertain right opinions of *Deity*, that they should rest in what is foreign to true religion and virtue. Can any one imagine, that it is pleasing to God, that I believe right; if that belief has not a proper effect upon my temper and life? Can any one persuade a Being, that uses his reason well, that any thing can recommend to the divine favor, short of a being like to him in his perfect moral character? By right notions of *Deity*, we shall get rid of depending upon what is foreign in religion; and by which, so many thousands, in every age, have been unhappily shipwreck'd. That is one great and unhappy consequence of *Superstition*. It is not *religion*; it is that which is placed in lieu of it; and which serves a strong inclination

SERM. cination to indulge some criminal de-  
XIII. fires.

Since this is the best way to get rid of *Superstition*, we may see that a right *knowledge of God* is of great importance. There are some instances of *Superstition*, that excite and awaken dread and terror; and render life unhappy and miserable. *Superstition* paints *Deity* as armed with thunderbolts; which he throws at pleasure, without being under any law to his actions. And, upon this view of the case, how many instances have there been of minds quite distracted, in consequence of mistaken and erroneous opinions of *the Divine attributes*?

Some have thought that *Deity*, being soveraign, may act at pleasure; and make the greater part of his creatures miserable for-ever: that he might make a discovery, a cruel display, of his justice. Strange opinion this! Surely it must take its rise from entertaining wrong apprehensions of *the Divine perfections*. It is no surprize, to any considerate mind, that the poet makes *fear to be the rise of the Gods*. He, no doubt, had observed the superstitious  
terror,

terror, that attended false notions of *Deity*; SERM.  
and then imagined that, from this fear, the XIII.  
acknowledgement of *Deity* took its rise. ~~~~~

Without dispute, he was wrong. For, if we entertain right apprehensions of *Deity*, we shall conceive of him, as a Being infinitely kind and benevolent; and that he is so good, that he will never make any of his creatures unhappy; till, by their own vicious conduct, they have made themselves subjects incapable of happiness. And whoever hath right apprehensions of *Deity*, must suppose, that he delights in doing good, and judgment is his strange work; that it is what he is obliged to do, in consequence of his being a wise governor. But he has contrived every thing that is requisite, to bring his creatures to their proper perfection and happiness.

You see, then, that there is this advantage attending right sentiments of *Deity*; that we shall, thereby, be free from all panics, which may arise, where there is only a twilight, or a very small knowledge of *Deity*. But, where knowledge is carried to as great a height, as our imperfect

SERM. imperfect powers will admit of, we shall  
 XIII. then clearly see that all these panics are the  
 effect, and consequence, of not framing  
 right and just sentiments of the *Divine*  
*perfections.*

6. From a right *knowledge* of God, and  
 of his properties and attributes, we come  
 to see that there is nothing in *Entbu-*  
*iasm.*

I know nothing, which makes so sur-  
 prizing an appearance, at first view, as  
 persons pretending that they have raptures  
 from heaven, which we cannot frame a  
 right idea of: That they have such plea-  
 sure arising from a being *self-annihilated*,  
 and lost in the *Divine Being*, that they can  
 live in a world of sense, almost without  
 conversing with any sensible object. They  
 talk in transport, and seem to be in such  
 agitations, as if they were filled with *Deity*;  
 and they appear to have some resemblance  
 to those, who managed the oracle, of old.  
 But all this arises from wrong apprehen-  
 sions of God. For, if we conceive of  
*Deity*, as of a pure spirit, who is pleased  
 with what is reasonable and fit; and that  
 he connects happiness with virtue, and  
 misery.



misery with vice: Then we know that all SERM.  
 this wild-fire blaze, and heat of fancy, XIII.  
 will never recommend us the more to  
*Deity*. If it does influence us to express  
 a care to be like God in his moral cha-  
 racter; and induces us to shun what is con-  
 trary to the divine moral character; and to  
 press, with great earnestness, after a likeness  
 to God, in righteousness and true holiness;  
 so far we may see it is commendable.  
 But, if it terminate only in rapture, in  
 heat of fancy, and warmth of imagination,  
 and in a flame of devotion; I say, if it  
 terminate here; it is, certainly, a very bad  
 foundation, to build our hopes of happi-  
 ness upon.

We are, indeed, made so, as to have  
*affections*, as well as *reason*. And God,  
 who knows our frame, must be pleased,  
 when he sees our affections rightly directed  
 and governed: and that the end, for which  
 these were placed in the human nature, is  
 answered. But still, as he is *a spirit*, it  
 is not a sensible emotion, that does please  
 him. It is right sentiments; a right com-  
 plexion of mind; and right conduct; by  
 which we are brought to a resemblance of  
 VOL. II. U him;

SERM. him; that can give us just ground to entertain an apprehension that he is well with us, and we with him; or that we are in his favor, and secure of his kind providence, with the durable and happy effects thereof.

XIII.

7. *Lastly.* From a right knowledge of the divine perfections, we are furnished with the strongest and most powerful motives to engage, and influence, us to a steady pursuit of what is proper to render us perfect, and to make us happy.

When we consider those duties, which refer to God, to *others*, and to *ourselves*; we shall find, that, as they, in a great measure, appear to be duties, arising from right sentiments of the *Divine perfections*; so, from the same views of the *Divine attributes*, the practice of them is strongly urged. Can I apprehend that God is the first cause and governor of the world; and will be judge; and not see, that hereby are represented to my mind, powerful and strong motives to influence me to resemble him in his perfect moral character? Can I imagine, since he is all-powerful, that I can, if I offend him, be an equal match for

for him? Or can I ever think, that I shall  
 escape punishment; because he is a good  
 Being; when he is also a wise governor? SERM.  
XIII.

How can I ever flatter myself with vain hopes, that I shall escape the effects of his displeasure; when I know it is as necessary, that he should punish the incorrigible; as that he should express his kindest regards to those, who are sincerely desirous to attain his image; and to be made capable of happiness in his presence; by being made like to him in purity of heart and life?

There is no duty, which we can recommend, but we shall see plainly that there is the same argument to enforce the practice of it, arising from some attribute of the *Divine Being*. So that you see how important it is to gain right sentiments, or notions, of the *Divine perfections*.

Without knowing these, we cannot come to any certain assurance, that our powers are to be depended upon. We cannot, without such right sentiments of *God*, have any certain mark, or criterion, to judge, whether what is proposed to us, as a *revelation*, is really a revelation, or the contrary.

SERM. Without the *knowledge* of the *Divine per-*  
 XIII. *fections*, we cannot clearly see what is es-

~ fential in religion, and what not : and how that, which is *positive*, is to be viewed by us, as means only, to bring us to that which is like to God, in his perfect moral character. Without right notions of God, we cannot so well see the weakness of offering any thing against that which is of a moral nature. For, by a right knowledge of the *Divine perfections*, we know that what is properly *moral*, when taken in an extensive view, is most important in religion.

Without this *knowledge* of the *Divine perfections*, we are not capable of being free from all *Superstition* : neither can we see the weakness of *Enthusiasm*. By a right *knowledge* of the *Divine perfections*, we not only come to know what is most important in religion ; but we derive very strong and powerful motives to influence, and ingage, us to the practice of what is truly religious ; and what will render us acceptable to God.

Without a right *knowledge* of God, we cannot so clearly see, that virtue will at last be



be rewarded, and vice punished: but, by <sup>SERM.</sup> the *knowledge* of the *divine attributes*, we <sup>XIII.</sup> cannot but own, that true religion and virtue are strongly pressed and powerfully recommended.

Thus I have opened to you the importance of the *knowledge of God*; and shown you, that gaining right notions of the *attributes of God* is of great advantage, yea even of the last importance to us.

I shall conclude this discourse, by giving you some cautions, with regard to this momentous subject.

1. Take care least there be any secret vice, which you want to indulge. For, if that be the case, it is very great odds, whether your notions of God will not receive a tincture; and be marred and spoiled by that wrong bias. The wrong sentiments, which have been formed of God, in every age, have, in a great degree, taken their rise from this cause. Vice has made right sentiments of God less agreeable. If we form right notions of the *attributes of God*, we may easily see that he is perfectly moral; and therefore, that he must hate the workers of iniquity. It is impossible to enter-

SERM. tain different sentiments of *Deity*. When  
 XIII. therefore, any person, through strength  
 of habits, is resolved to continue in  
 any course of vice, he is attempting  
 to model *Deity*, so as to reconcile him  
 to the practice of what is criminal; that so  
 he may have an expectation of favor and  
 happiness from him. It is, therefore, of  
 the last consequence, to take care that we  
 are upright in our desires and endeavors to  
 entertain right sentiments of *Deity*. The  
 man of vice does not like to think of God,  
 as of a Being that is perfectly moral. And,  
 therefore, he fixes upon some other attri-  
 bute; and raises to himself a *Deity*, that  
 is all goodness; and then, flatters himself,  
 with a vain opinion, that the Being, who  
 made him, will never make him unhappy.  
 This is a wrong notion. Indeed, the de-  
 sign of the creator was to make all Beings  
 as happy, as their powers were capable of.  
 But, if they will do that, which is incon-  
 sistent with happiness: and, in the pursuit  
 of which, they are preparing misery to them-  
 selves; how is it that they can ever imagine,  
 that that Being, who is the universal gover-  
 nor,

nor, is all *goodness*; when, as a wise governor, SERM.  
he must have a regard to the honor of his XIII.  
laws and of his government? 

2. Take care that, when you are forming sentiments of *Deity*, you do not suffer any thing of your particular complexion to enter into the pursuit.

Certainly; the love of vice has been attended with very ill effects, in this pursuit. And, in like manner, men's regarding their own peculiar complexion and temper, has been another source of wrong sentiments of *Deity*. If we find that we are disposed to melancholy; let us take care, that we do not thence form a judgment of *Deity*. For, if we do, we shall describe him, in such a manner, as is not agreeable to the just idea of him, who is a Being of all perfection. From the gloom of our melancholy complexion, we shall imagine, that he is surrounded with thunderbolts; and then, can never approach him with affection and love; as apprehending that he is stern and inflexible; or of such a tremendous character, as excites a panick, or groundless fear.

SERM.

On the other hand, if we are chearful  
 XIII. and languine, we must take care, least we  
 represent him as *all mercy*.

In one word: — Let us carefully consider the reason of things ; and rise to the divine perfections, by a proper train of reasoning, abstracted from any disposition in our peculiar complexion of mind,

To conclude. — Let us often attend to it, that this is a part of knowlege, which we have the highest reason to cultivate. It is, in itself, attended with innumerable advantages. And it is that, by which our reasonable make will be carried to the highest and greatest perfection. There is no subject more worthy our attending to, than this of the *attributes and perfections of Deity*.

Above all ; let us take care that this knowlege has the proper effect and influence upon our temper and life. Such as our sentiments are ; such, in all probability, will our behavior be. Right sentiments will produce right dispositions and right actions. And, by these, we shall  
 grow



grow up to a likeness to God, more and SERM.  
more, in this life: and shall, when we are XIII,  
called to leave this world, have a more  
solid and well-grounded hope, of being  
for-ever happy, in a much more perfect,  
glorious, and happy state. AMEN.



grow up to a likeness to God, more and more,  
 more, in this life: and I shall, when we are  
 called to leave this world, have a more  
 full and well-grounded hope, of being  
 for ever happy in a more glorious  
 glory, and happy than I am.

Open the windows

Open the windows

Open the windows

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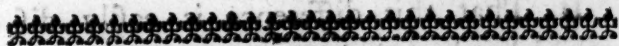
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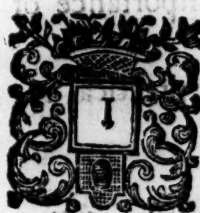
## S E R M O N    X I V .

The first sermon on moral obligations.



ISAIAH V. 20.

*Wo unto them that call evil good,  
and good evil; that put dark-  
ness for light, and light for  
darkness; that put bitter for  
sweet, and sweet for bitter.*



I HAVE, in several discourses, SERM.  
treated at large, upon the XIV.  
*Being and attributes of* God. I am, now, pro-  
ceeding to another principle  
of religion, without which it will not  
stand; and the importance of which will  
be easily seen. And that is *The difference*  
*of actions.*

The

SERM. The words, which I have read, will  
 XIV. lay a foundation for discoursing upon this  
 subject.

In treating of it, I shall take the following method.

I. Shew you that there is a difference in actions.

II. That this difference is easily discerned by the mind.

III. That, from this difference of actions, there is an internal obligation results,

IV. That it is the main and essential part of *religion*, to conform our temper and life to an agreeableness to this difference of actions, which we shall easily be led to discern.

V. I shall consider the importance of this part of divine knowledge.

VI. Conclude, by making practical reflections.

I. I shall shew you that there is a difference of actions.

This



This is expressed in the words, which SERM.  
I have read. *Wo unto them that call evil XIV.*  
*good, and good evil; that put darkness for*  
*light, and light for darkness; that put bitter*  
*for sweet, and sweet for bitter.*

For the evidence of this difference of actions, nothing is necessary, I think, but an induction of particulars. I appeal to your own consciences: "Is there not a  
" beauty in acting agreeably to our being  
" intelligent? when reason has the empire  
" and the lower powers are regulated by it,  
" does there not appear a character much  
" more amiable, than when the lower powers  
" usurp the throne? Do you not think  
" that a person, who always expresses a  
" care to act, in a manner agreeable to  
" the rank, which he holds, in the creation of God, is not much more beautiful and amiable; than a person, that  
" suffers his appetites and passions to reign;  
" and lets his mind, which is the principle of action, be enslaved and governed  
" by these appetites and passions; which  
" appear to be designed, by the creator,  
" to be under a proper regulation?"

I cannot

SERM. I cannot but apprehend that all this is  
 XIV. seen with the greatest clearness. When

any, by excesses, puts himself off his guard; and incapacitates himself for either acting becoming his character, or being useful to others; is there not something that appears extremely deformed? Of consequence, every one must with ease see, that sobriety is different from the contrary; and there is in such a conduct what appears beautiful and fit. When we find a person eager in the pursuit of sensual pleasures, and debasing himself into the very character of a brute; intirely neglecting and disregarding his higher powers; it cannot but be owned, that there is a wide difference between him and those, that regulate their dispositions to the pleasures of sense, and that keep a strict rein over their appetites.

When we see any so eager in the pursuit of this world, as to make others think, that they imagine all things here below are to be scrambled for; just as they have power and interest to attain, or secure any possession. When we see that they are so fond of attaining, or amassing, riches  
 that

that they will violate truth, justice, and SERM.  
what the world calls *honor*; we cannot XIV.  
but discern that such sink into great deformity. On the contrary, when we see persons pursue the world with a proper temper; and not exercising such an eagerness, as to break thro' the rules of justice and beneficence; the character strikes, and gives a pleasure. When we see Beings, who treat others with cruelty and oppression, that are of their own make; we cannot but find that there is something in us that disapproves of such a temper and behavior. On the contrary, we cannot forbear applauding kindness and beneficence. When we behold one, that ever has a good will to those that are in his own frame; and expresses a concern to do all the kind offices, that are in his power, to make others happy; we, from thence, are led to esteem and highly applaud such a character. If there was no difference in actions, there would be no difference in the beauty or deformity of any behavior; neither could there, possibly, be any difference in crimes. For, where there is no difference, what appears more evil to any, would,

SERM. would, then, have no just foundation.

XIV. And, then, the killing of a father, would be no more a crime, or occasion no more guilt, than the killing of a fly or other insect.

And surely, no one, that has a reasonable nature, will ever own such an absurdity as this.

When any has expressed great goodness, in the education of another; and has followed such an one with innumerable instances of beneficence and kindness; if the person, that is thus obliged, by an innumerable train of favors, should treat ill the person, who has shewn such goodness to him; if he should rise up in a passion and stab him; and much more, if he should deliberately kill him; would it not create horror and shuddering? And yet, there is no foundation of charging such an one of doing evil, if there be no difference in actions.

But, why should I pursue this, in all these instances, which I am capable of producing? Without all doubt (to carry it a little farther) there is a difference between a profane conduct towards the creator, and a proper reverence and veneration paid to him. Surely; we should be shocked extremely, to hear any man utter the highest blasphemy



blasphemy against that Being ; from whom SERM.  
we have received our existence ; and by XIV.  
whose bounty we, every moment, do sub-  
sist. To have no regard to that Being, in  
whom we live, and by whose goodness we  
are continually supported ; would carry in  
it great unfitness, and, if the mind is ex-  
ercised at all, would appear greatly de-  
formed.

I have, in general, run over the duties,  
that refer to ourselves, to others, and to  
God. And, I think, by the instances  
which I have mentioned, it appears be-  
yond doubt, that there is a difference in  
actions ; that there are some principles and  
behavior, that carry a beauty in them ; and  
others, a deformity. And, of consequence,  
this principle must be allowed, *that there  
is a difference between good and evil.*

II. This difference of actions is seen  
with great ease.

I think this is expressed, by the prophet,  
when he says, *Wo unto them that call good  
evil ; and evil good : [i. e. that alter things,  
or attempt such a change] that put darkness  
for light, and light for darkness ; that put*

SERM. *bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter.* The

XIV. *prophet*, with great judgment, makes the mind as capable of seeing the difference of good and evil, as our senses are of distinguishing betwixt light and darkness, bitter and sweet. Every one must, then, see that the meaning is, "It is easy for a reasonable Being, to distinguish moral good or evil."

But I would set this in such a light as may convince every one. This difference of actions may not be attended to; or there may be some instances of conduct, which may be perplexed; and in which it is not so easy to know what is the rule of right action; especially where there is a complication of circumstances. The mind may not see that two and two make four; if it does not attend to it; or has not had occasion to think of the equality of two and two with four. But, when this is offered to the mind, or when the mind reflects, it cannot but easily see this; when it knows the idea, which is affixed to twice two and four; and that there is an equality betwixt them: — I say, the mind, then, cannot any longer refuse its assent.

This

This however, does require some attention of the mind. And how easily soever the difference of actions is discerned, the mind must attend : only there is this to be considered, in moral actions, that there is a consciousness in the mind, *i. e.* we are conscious that we are under a rule ; and, when we observe it, it yields satisfaction ; when we deviate from it, we feel pain and distress. This must, undoubtedly, excite, or awaken, every intelligent Being, at some time or other, to regard, and to attend to, the difference that there is in virtue and vice.

There are some instances, indeed, in which it may be attended with difficulties to know what is right. There may be such different circumstances, as may make it hard to determine what is reasonable and fit to act, in such a given case. But then, these instances are but very few : and, when we have those offered to us to determine, if we are impartial ; and under no bias ; we shall, generally speaking, easily be led to see what is the truth of the case ; or what we are to act. Indeed, we are very much liable to prejudice ; and to

SERM. be bias'd by habits, that arise from gratify-

XIV. ing our lower appetites and passions. But, notwithstanding this, it does not at all follow, that, if we will use our reasoning powers, without suffering ourselves to be under any bias; we need be at a loss about the difference of virtue and vice. No one is at a loss to judge, when the case has a reference to himself. When any has received an injury from another; or has had any unkind treatment, or usage; he complains. He thinks it is extremely contrary to virtue, that any should use him in such a manner. And yet, perhaps, he, at the same time, uses others worse, than the person, he complains of, treats him. By this, we may easily know what is the truth of the case; and what our conduct should be. It is only supposing that the actions of others were done to us; and how we should then judge of them; and we may easily know what is just, kind, and beneficent. It is evident, at first sight, that to be true, and faithful; just, and beneficent; is much more fit, becoming, and beautiful, than the contrary. And, whenever we act disagreeably to what is reasonable and fit, we find we cannot stand the



reproaches of our own mind. This is the reason why men of vice run into ten thousand amusements, rather than converse with their own guilty thoughts. And we may easily observe, how calm and serene the man is, that ever takes care to act becoming him, as a reasonable Being, with regard to God, others, and himself. Trace such a man into all his retirements; he has no tumult, no anguish, no guilt to torment and vex him. All is calm, and serene; and he can look up to that *Deity*, whose moral character is perfect, with the highest confidence. But trace a man of the contrary character; and you will see that such a one is always disturbed in his mind; and cannot make a retreat from the world. For there are terrible apprehensions of guilt, which haunt and disturb him. He cannot address to his God, with any comfort; because he knows that God is a righteous Being, and that his own character is quite the reverse.

You see then, that the difference of actions, or of virtue and vice, is easily discerned, and even felt, by all men, that attend, and reflect at all. This shows the dismal folly of men of vice, who hurry

SERM. on from one place and scene to another, to

XIV. drown the sense of guilt; and to make an

hard shift, if they possibly can, to be absent from their own minds. Hereby the understanding, by which they are distinguished from other Beings, is not only neglected, but abused, and perverted: and all the higher powers are, by mere force, brought into a state of vassalage and servitude to those that are inferior. And yet these are the men of folly, who look upon the grave and thoughtful, with a contemptuous eye; as those that have no spirit, no life, and no true relish of things. These are the persons that condemn the excellent of the earth; *i. e.* men of thought and religious conduct.

I am sensible, indeed, there has been a set of philosophers, in this country, that has denied the difference of good and evil; and asserted that there is no such thing, till it is settled and fixed by the civil power. *Surprizing philosophy!* How came it that men entered into civil society? and, by compact, agreed to be regulated by such laws? The philosopher says, "that, before they entered into this compact, they  
" were

“ were under the law of nature, and in a SERM.  
“ state of hostility; and the consequence XIV.  
“ of their being in such a state was, that  
“ they could not live without entering in-  
“ to society.” Why, then? there was  
something to distinguish things. That,  
which led them to enter into compact,  
was the good and happiness, which they  
expected from thence. And, when they  
made laws, surely they must see that there  
was a difference in conforming to those  
laws, and acting quite the reverse. So that,  
I think, even by his own way of reason-  
ing, he allows a difference between virtue  
and vice, antecedent to law, or civil com-  
pact.

I would farther observe, that all people  
applaud the practice of virtue; even those,  
who are themselves vicious. When a man  
of the most immoral character sets upon  
writing a dedication, or an encomium up-  
on his patron, he knows and distinguishes  
what is fit, and what is beautiful, from  
the contrary. Why do not we find those  
persons of vice, who say, *that there is no*  
*difference in actions*, applauding their hero  
for his wickedness and villainy? And yet

SERM. you no where find ; that even rakes, them-

XIV. selves, ever put that into the character of  
 one, whom they would applaud for true  
 greatness of mind.

Besides ; men of vice, if they have any  
 thing to do in this world, do not care to  
 have it performed, or accomplished, by  
 men of their own character. *Is he honest ?*  
*is the question. Will he exercise faithful-*  
*ness ? will he be true and just ?* These are  
 questions, that even men of vice are ready  
 to ask, when any affair of importance, of  
 their own, is to be conducted. Surely ;  
 they plainly and clearly discover, that they  
 have a very distinct apprehension of the  
 excellency of one sort of behavior, and  
 deformity of the contrary. Again ; we may  
 farther see, that even men of vice will not  
 only be solicitous, that their affairs be un-  
 der the conduct of men of virtue ; but  
 catch them at certain times ; and they will  
 even give such commendations of men of  
 honesty, and virtue ; as plainly to mani-  
 fest, that they have a clear notion of the  
 distinction between virtue and vice. But  
 why should I labor to prove that which  
 appears



appears with so much clearness, to every SERM.  
one, that will exercise their own thoughts? XIV.

III. From the difference of actions, and the clearness, with which every one may perceive that difference, especially in the greater lines of conduct;— it will follow, “ that all intelligent Beings must be “ under an internal obligation, of acting “ what is fit and reasonable; and of shunning the contrary.” Or, in other words, “ *That we are under a law.*”

I call it *an internal obligation*; because it arises from the mind’s seeing the beauty of some principles and actions, and the deformity of others. And, when this is seen, the mind cannot but choose what is fit; and refuse the reverse. Or else, the man must fall under the disapprobation and reproaches of his own mind. And this is the same with any obligation, or law. I call it *an internal obligation*; because I would distinguish it from an express declaration of the divine will. We are certainly (whether we will attend to *Deity* or no) under obligations, as reasonable Beings, to comply with what appears reasonable

SERM. able to us : and to express a care, to

XIV. avoid what is unreasonable and unfit.

And this is denoted by the term *law*, that is placed in our very frame and make ; which certainly is a rule, constituted by the *Divine Being*, for us to determine and act by. Nay, reason is *the rule*, by which the first, all-perfect mind does himself determine and act.

I know not how it has happened, but some have thought, that there is no law antecedent to divine revelation ; by which we are obliged to such a temper and such actions. There can be nothing more contrary to truth, than this. For, if there is no rule, that shall have the force of a law, antecedent to the divine will ; we are not capable ever of judging of any revelation of the divine will : nay, we are not in a capacity of forming right notions of *Deity*. When we say, *God is of a perfect moral character* ; what idea have we ? If we say, *He is just, and righteous* ; what notions have we of *justice*, and *righteousness* ? If what is just, and righteous, arises only from his will ; we can have no certain principle to come at the knowledge of God's moral character. And, if so ; all must be turned

ed

ed into intire doubt and scepticism. But, SERM.  
if we suppose that the first reason; which XIV.  
sees, in the perfectest manner, what is fit; {  
and has a power uncontrollable; whereby  
he cannot be hindered in determining and  
acting what is fit; and, when we know  
that he has no bias, from any views of in-  
terest; we are sure, then, that he will in-  
variably determine and act agreeably to the  
difference of things. And we cannot say  
that this difference of things arises from  
his creating Beings that stand in such re-  
lations; from whence virtue or vice may  
arise. For these relations of things appear-  
ed to his infinite mind, antecedent to the  
bringing any Being into existence. And,  
of consequence, we must allow that this  
difference is eternal and immutable: and  
ought to be looked upon, by us, as a rule,  
by which even the first, all-perfect mind  
will ever determine and act. And, in this  
way, ought we to conceive of it, as a rule  
to us; and as that, by which we are ob-  
liged, in the very nature of things, to  
pursue what appears to us beautiful and fit;  
and to avoid what appears to us deformed  
and unfit. Indeed, this will easily be seen,  
by a thinking person, to be the will of  
God.

SERM. GOD. For what is the rule of his own actions, he must will to be done by every

XIV.  reasonable agent, that he makes. And we may easily discern, that it is his will; in regard that he has connected with moral good, natural good; and with moral evil, natural evil; as we have plainly shown already.

This then, I think, must be allowed, that since we can distinguish what is right and fit, from what is the contrary; *we must be under a law, i. e. obliged*, by such a perception of things, to act what appears to us right; and to avoid what appears to us wrong. And that it is *a law*, or that which obliges, is apparent; because, if we consider *obligation* strictly and carefully, we shall find nothing binding, but what is *reasonable*.

I should have proceeded to the next head; but shall, at present, conclude with one or two reflections.

1. We may from hence see, how vain it is for men to plead their want of power; or that they have not had the advantages that some have, by education.

“ GOD



"God knows that they are weak and SERM.  
 "ignorant:" and this they make use of, XIV.  
 as a plea, to excuse themselves in their conduct, whenever their irregular behavior is brought to light. This, surely, is no justifiable excuse. For, tho' some have greater advantages in education, than others; and therefore have more to answer for, when the great judge of the world shall appear, and determine the states of mankind: Yet there are none, but may easily see, (if they will attend at all) that truth and falsehood differ: that there is greater disgrace in falsehood, than in expressing what is true. They easily know that, when another acts unjustly to them, he has done wrong. And does not this make it appear, beyond doubt, that they know what is just, and what is the contrary? They can tell when they are unkindly used by any. And, if they think proper to express an uneasiness, when they are oppressed; cannot they know that they ought not to oppress others? or to be unkind or cruel to any? Surely; they cannot but see, that it is much more amiable to pay a proper worship to *Deity*, than to blaspheme

SERM. blaspheme his sacred name. Surely; they

XIV. must see, when they have all from the bounty of heaven, that nothing is more proper, than that they should offer their praises unto him, from whom every good and perfect gift descends. They may, with great ease, come to the knowledge of the greater lines of conduct; which *reason* as well as *revelation* recommends, as necessary to our perfection and happiness. And, if they would regard those greater lines of moral virtue; and likewise mark the contrary; their understandings would soon attain greater freedom and ease; and be enlarged and widened. If they would attend to the principles of moral duties, that lie plain to their view; and practise accordingly; they would find, by such a practice, that they would be in a better disposition to attain higher truths, and see things in a more distinct light. *If you do these things, then shall you know.* There is connected with upright acting, an enlargement of the mind.

2. Let us not imagine that we are not under a law. For we are so, in our reasonable make.

This

This is expressed strongly, by the apostle *Paul*, *Rom. ii. 14, 15.* where he speaks of *the law*, that was in their minds; their conscience accusing, or excusing; as they acted agreeably or disagreeably to it. SERM.  
XIV.

This law in the mind, is, indeed, the original law of heaven; and which cannot be vacated by any other law. Therefore the sacred writers tell us, that *to obey is better than sacrifice, yea than whole burnt-offerings.* *To obey*, is the original law in our frame and make: and is better, *i. e.* more to be esteemed and valued by us; and will be more esteemed by the *Divine Being*, than whole burnt-offerings, and most expensive hecatombs, the most costly sacrifices that we can offer up to the creator of the world. When we cultivate our minds; and express a care to attain a temper, suitable to the law of our minds; we are engaged in that, which makes us like to God; and which, alone, lays a foundation of real and true happiness.

Let us, therefore, express a constant care to study the difference between virtue and vice; and a solicitude ever to follow and improve the dictates of our reasonable nature.

SERM. nature. If we would cultivate our mind,

XIV. we should easily find it capable of distin-

guishing good from evil; and, by the practice of goodness, be brought to a temper that is necessary, in order to make us happy here, as well as to prepare us for future happiness. If we act contrary to the dictates of our consciences, we shall raise a confusion and disorder in our frame; we shall pervert that light, which God did design, should be kept up in all his works, and we shall raise a storm and tempest in our own consciences; which will, by the painful sense of guilt, render us as unhappy, as we have made ourselves criminal: 'till we can stifle the reproaches of conscience; and, by the pleasures of sense and possessions of this world, still the clamors of our guilty minds. But surely, this is extremely dangerous. We may, perhaps, bring ourselves into a callous state; whereby we shall be less fit to know what is right or wrong: or, by which, we shall have no spirit in the pursuit of what is right. But we shall, hereby, plunge deep into crimes; and, at last, sit in the seat of the scorners, and make a jest of religion and



and virtue. For there is a progress in SERM.  
vice, as well as in virtue. And whoever XIV.  
breaks in upon one dictate of his mind,   
prepares the way for a second violation.  
And so it goes on; till at last the difference  
of actions is not attended to; perhaps des-  
pised, or opposed. But, when sickness  
and death approach: how strange an al-  
teration will there be, in such guilty per-  
sons? They will severely reproach them-  
selves that they have acted quite the reverse  
to what that original law directed and in-  
joined. They will, then, wish that they  
had never been born. They will stand on  
the brink of the other world, and shudder  
at the prospect, the dismal prospect, that  
they must be judged according to the law,  
which God has given them, and which  
they have violated. This will raise in them a  
very great unwillingness to die, and a strong  
desire that they may continue here; even  
when they feel the king of terrors exerting  
his power, so that there is not the least  
hope of continuing in this state any longer.

Let us, therefore, take care to conform  
to the dictates of this original law; and we  
shall ever find, that it will give us pleasing

SERM. reflections; whereby we shall be enabled  
 XIV. to consider our creator and governor, with  
 delight. And, when we come to quit  
 this world, we shall look into the other  
 state, without horror and anguish of mind;  
 nay, we shall, by the principles of the  
*Christian religion*, be animated and encour-  
 aged to look upon the promised reward,  
 with the highest pleasure, and with the  
 greatest joy.





## S E R M O N XV.

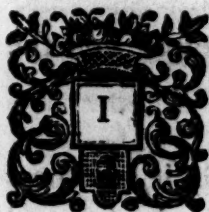
The unchangeable difference between good and evil.

The second sermon on this text.



ISAIAH V. 20.

*Wo unto them that call evil good,  
and good evil; that put darkness  
for light, and light for darkness;  
that put bitter for sweet, and  
sweet for bitter.*



N a former discourse from SERM.  
these words, we laid down XV.  
this method. ~~~~~

I, To prove, by an induction of particulars, that there is a difference in actions: or, in other words, that virtue and vice are of a different kind.

Y 2

II. To

SERM. II. To shew you that this difference of

XV. actions is discerned, by any intelligent nature, that does attend to things, (at least, in the greater lines) with as much clearness, as our senses distinguish light from darkness, or bitter from sweet.

III. That from this difference of actions, there arises *a law*; or, in other words, *an internal obligation* of conforming to what is right and fit, and of shunning the reverse.

Thus far I have proceeded, I now come,

IV. To shew you that this law, arising from our discerning the difference of actions, is that, which makes up what is most essential in religion. And,

V. *Lastly*, We shall set before you the importance of this principle.

The IVth thing proposed, is, to shew you, that *the law of reason* is the first and original law: and that our compliance with it, is most essential in *religion*.

There



There are some weak minds, which apprehend that a revelation carries in it something more of perfection, than the first, original law, founded in our frame. And they are very desirous of being distinguished by a zeal, sometimes, for principles of revelation, which are not of the last consequence: and they throw a contempt upon *this original law of God*. This, certainly, is entering into a wrong train of thoughts. It is *reason*, which makes us capable of *Religion*. Without this faculty, we could not distinguish a true revelation from a false: neither could we come at the true sense of revelation. *Reason*, therefore, is what opens to us the most essential part of our duty. To prove this, I shall represent to you, 1. That the design of *the revelation of Christ* (which is the most perfect discovery, that God has made, this way, of his will to man) is designed to produce, in us, a conformity to those laws, which the light of nature is capable of discovering to us. *Tit. ii. 12. For the grace of God, i. e. the gospel, appearing to all men, is designed to teach them, that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, they*

SERM.  
XV.

SERM. *should live soberly, righteously, and godly*

XV. *in this world.* The duties, which are implied in *sobriety*, are such as result from the original law of our reasonable make, and relate to ourselves. And so *justice* and *beneficence*, in our behavior and conduct to others; spring from the law of our minds. And, finally, *reason* will teach us the obligations, which we are under, as we stand related to God. You see, then, that the apostle expressly makes the ultimate end of the *Christian revelation*, to be the attaining the temper and conduct, which the original law, that God has favored us with, directs us to.

We find, farther; that the promises, which the gospel sets before us, are intended for this purpose. 2 Cor. vii. 1. *Having these promises, let us purify ourselves from all filthiness of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God.* Having the promises, which the apostle had mentioned in the preceding verses, viz. *I will receive you, and will be a Father unto you; and ye shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.* And since, from these promises of God's being a father, and their being

being children, there arises a prospect of the heavenly inheritance, the apostle plainly intimates, that the promise of eternal life, under the dispensation of the gospel, is designed to influence and engage us to the pursuit of what will bring us to a resemblance of God, in his moral character.

SERM.  
XV.

And, as the promises of the gospel are intended for this end, so are the threatenings, *Rom, i. 18. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven, i.e. in the gospel, against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men*: whereby the apostle plainly intimates that the threatening of the second death, in the gospel, is intended to awaken us to repentance, and to excite us to the practice of those duties, which the law of our reason make recommends. With this view, our Savior came into the world; and he was called *Jesus*, because his design was to save men from sin. He is, accordingly, represented, as coming with an intent to destroy the works of the devil, *1 John iii. 8.* And, if we go into particulars, we shall find, that his death is set before us, in the Christian revelation, as that, by which

SERM. which we come under obligations to die  
 XV. unto sin and live unto holiness, 1 Pet.

ii. 24. and, Rom. vi. 4. His resurrection is, by the apostle described, as that, which brings us under an engagement, to rise again to newness of life. With this view, the gospel-revelation sets before us a day, in which God, by his son, will judge all men; and distribute, to every one, according to what he has done in the body, whether good or evil. And it is evident (as we shall show presently) that, in the procedure of the great and dreadful day, what is of a moral nature will be brought into the account, either of rewards, or punishments.

2. We shall find that, in *revelation*, what is *positive*, is represented as designed to influence to what is *moral*, and of eternal and immutable obligation.

*The law of Moses* was attended with numerous rites and ceremonies; and yet we are taught, even in that law, *That to obey is better than sacrifice; and to regard the original law of God, preferable to whole burnt-offerings.* Nay, and we shall see, that none of these positive duties, but were intended to secure and guard the observation



servation of what the original law enjoined. SERM.  
*The Jews*, in their infant state, were XV.  
taught by figures, and hieroglyphics; but  
yet it was apparent, that, by their puri-  
fications, and by circumcision, and other  
rites, they were to be taught purity of  
heart and life; which *true reason* discovers  
to be binding and obligatory.

If we go to the *positives* under the *Christian religion*, we shall find that they are so represented, as to convince every attentive reader, that they are of no value, unless they produce in us a divine temper and a regular conduct. *Baptism* is even slighted, under the Christian religion, when it only takes in, or comprehends, the purifying of the flesh; but it is plainly intimated, that then it is valuable, when it is *the stipulation of a good conscience*.

But this will farther appear, if we consider, that an exact compliance with those things, which are only positive, is contemned and despised in *revelation*, when they are, with the greatest exactness, practised, unattended with obedience to the precepts of the original law of God. *Prov. xv. 8. The sacrifice of the wicked is an abomination to the Lord.* This is described  
in

SERM. in a very elegant and beautiful manner,

XV.

*Isaiab i. 11—15. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices, unto me, saith the Lord? I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts: and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands; to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations. Incense is an abomination unto me. The new-moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with: it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. Your new-moons, and your appointed feasts, my soul hateth. They are a trouble to me: I am weary to bear them. And, when you spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: nay, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear. One would be surprized, when they read this strong description of God's dislike of what he had himself enjoined: but the reason of it is given, in the following words, Your hands are full of blood: you are given to cruelty and oppression; you violate the laws that are of immutable obligation. And therefore it follows, Wash you, make you*

you clean, put away the evil of your doings **SERM.**  
from before mine eyes. Cease to do evil; **XV.**  
learn to do well. You see, then, with how  
much flight, *the prophet* speaks of the ob-  
servance of what was *positive*, under the  
religion of *Moses*, when that was unaccom-  
panied with a sincere regard to what was  
truly internal and of immutable obliga-  
tion.

3. We shall find that the scripture, not  
only throws a contempt, upon what is ex-  
ternal and ritual, when not attended with  
a regard to the duties that have intrinsic ex-  
cellencies; but, whenever it opens a sum-  
mary of our duty; it sets before us the du-  
ties that are of everlasting and immutable  
obligation. *Micah vi. 8. What doeth the  
Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and  
to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy  
God?* The Pharisees neglected moral du-  
ties, and expressed a very great zeal to per-  
form, in the most exact manner, their  
tithes: Whereas *our Lord* says, *These they  
ought to have done*; but, at the same time,  
*they should not have neglected the weightier  
things of the law.* And these plainly ap-  
pear

SERM. appear to be duties, which the law of our  
 XV. reasonable make recommends.

4. When the apostle mentions *faith*, it is in such a way, as plainly to show, that, unless it be accompanied with the genuine fruits of sincere piety and virtue, it is dead, or like a dead carcase. And we find the same apostle representing true religion to consist in those duties, that have intrinsic excellencies in them, and which *reason* does represent to us as binding. *Pure religion and undefiled, is to visit the widow, and fatherless, and to keep our conduct unspotted from those vices, that are generally practised among men.*

5. This, I think, will appear in a yet stronger light, when we find, that the characters of such as are the favorites of God, are taken from the practice and observation of the laws of reason. *Job i. 1. That man was perfect and upright; one, that feared God, and eschewed evil. Ps. xv. 1, &c.* we have a most beautiful description of the character of such as shall dwell in the tabernacle of God: "Those, " that do not revile their neighbors; that " will stand to an agreement, though attended



“ tended with disadvantage to themselves, SERM.  
“ and the like.” XV.

In a word, we shall find that, both in the Old and New Testament, when characters, that are excellent, are given; they are taken from such a conduct, as is agreeable to *the laws of reason*. So *Acts* x. 1, &c. *Cornelius* did alms, and was upright: and his prayers, in consequence, were accepted. It is upon that account, God is represented to have no respect of persons, but whoever does right, in every age, and in every nation, is accepted of God, *Acts* x. 34, 35.

6. *Lastly*, in the day of retribution, the inquisition will be about obedience, or disregard, to the laws, that are opened to us in our reasonable make.

This you may see, *Rom.* ii. 6, &c. *Matt.* xxv. 31, &c. and many other places.

Now then, let us recollect what has been offered, to show *that the observation of the original law of God, is that, which is most essential in religion.* “ If the obser-  
“ vation of this is represented as the last  
“ design

SERM.

XV.

“ design of all revelation : If it is that  
 “ which is intended by the promises or  
 “ threatnings of the Christian doctrine :  
 “ If our Savior is said to come to destroy the  
 “ works of the devil : If all, that is of a  
 “ positive nature, is represented as designed  
 “ to promote obedience to this law : And,  
 “ if the exactest observance of positive in-  
 “ stitutions is despised and contemned, by  
 “ the great governor of the world, when  
 “ unattended with sincere piety and exten-  
 “ sive virtue : If, when there is a short  
 “ summary of all religion, there are found  
 “ instances of a moral obligation only, or  
 “ chiefly : If, when there is a character  
 “ of such as are in the favor of God, it is  
 “ under the representation of complying  
 “ with duties, that are of eternal obliga-  
 “ tion ; If, (in a word) in the great day,  
 “ there will be the exactest scrutiny into  
 “ the moral temper and conduct of men :”  
 — We have just reason, from all these in-  
 stances, to apprehend, that the main and  
 most principal part of religion, is a sincere  
 and steady observance of this first, original  
 law of God.

V. It

V. It was proposed to shew the importance of complying with this divine law.

This, I think, will be made to appear, by three considerations.

1. If this is necessary to secure the divine favor and acceptance:

2. If it is absolutely requisite to bring us to the proper perfection of our intelligent nature: And,

3. If it is indissolubly connected with our happiness here, and our perfect happiness in the future world; If, I say, these things be so; it will, to every considerate person, be evident, that the observance of what this original law of God enjoins, is of the last consequence.

This, I think, may be made out, with great clearness.

1. It is of the greatest importance, when we are assured, by *reason* and *revelation*, that, without such a regard to this law, we can never be certain of the favor of God, or secure of his regards to us.

The idea, which we must have of *Deity*, is, *that he is a Being of a perfect moral character.*

SERM. *character.* And, if so, we can never please

XV. him, but by a concern to resemble him in that character. We must regard God, in this view, as hating iniquity; and as having a regard only to a resemblance of him, where Beings are under moral government. And, therefore, it is, certainly and very plainly, a mistake; and a very dangerous mistake, for any to found their hope of the divine favor and acceptance, upon what is external. Many, we find, are apt to rest their hope of future glory, upon right sentiments; or upon the love, which Christ has expressed to men, in dying for them, on the cross. Certainly, these are very improper grounds, to build our hopes of acceptance with God upon; or our hope of being happy for-ever.

It is, no doubt, a very great favor, that God has, by his son, opened to us future happiness: and, in raising him from the dead as the first fruits, ascertained to us a resurrection to eternal life. But will any thing, that is external, avail to the happiness of another world? or to the divine favor; when there is wanting a temper  
and



and complexion of soul, that is absolutely SERM.  
necessary to give us a certain ground to XV.  
hope that we are in the favor of GOD.  
No one can reasonably think that he is in  
the favor of GOD; when the rule of his  
actions is different from that, by which the  
*Divine Being* determines and acts: when  
his temper appears quite immoral; and, in  
consequence, the reverse to the character  
of GOD, as a Being that is perfectly moral.  
If happiness comes from GOD, as certainly  
it does; to give us a firm and solid founda-  
tion to hope for it, it is necessary that  
we be brought to an assimilation, or like-  
ness, to GOD, in those moral perfections,  
which are capable of being transcribed by  
us, into temper and life. Can any one  
flatter himself with an apprehension that  
he is in the favor of that Being, who is true  
and righteous, and equitable, and good;  
when he is conscious to himself, that fals-  
hood, injustice, oppression and cruelty  
reign in him? Surely; such a person can-  
not but be abandoned and lost to reason,  
who reflects upon the character of GOD;  
and yet hopes that he is in his favor; tho'  
he is conscious, that his rule of action and

SERM. bent of conduct is in direct opposition to  
 .XV. the divine perfections. Whatever mark,  
 we take, of trying whether we have just  
 ground to apprehend, that we are in the  
 favor of God, and have hope of a reward,  
 we certainly deceive ourselves; if we do  
 not take in this, which is the most essen-  
 tial mark. All others may fail: but, if  
 we have this character, we are certain, as  
 God has a Being, that we are well with  
 him, and in a state of friendship; and have  
 just reason to expect from him, whose good-  
 ness is unbounded, every thing that is pro-  
 per and necessary to render us happy.

This, therefore, must be of impor-  
 tance: since, without it, we can never be  
 sure, that we are in the favor of God, and  
 accepted of, by him.

2. It is of importance to comply with  
 this divine law; because it is that, which  
 is absolutely necessary to bring us to the  
 proper perfection of our intelligent nature.

When *reason* holds the government; and  
 all our lower powers are in a proper sub-  
 jection to it; we are in that state of per-  
 fection, which our make represents to be  
 necessary. Now, nothing can give us this  
 2 perfect-

perfection, but our being reconciled to the practice of what the first and original law of God enjoins, or recommends. For this law does oblige us to gain a wise and proper regulation of our passions: that we may be, by that, more disposed to the practice of universal righteousness, goodness, and piety. Wherever there is a disorder of the appetites and affections, there must be great obstructions, arising thence, to the exercise of the duties, that refer to *others*, and to GOD. And, for this reason, I am inclined to think, that men of vice, who give the reins to what is irregular and disorderly, are disposed to throw off all sense of religion. They do not like those restraints and curbs; and, finding it difficult to gain the ascendant over themselves, rather than forfeit those lower pleasures, they espouse the brute, and put off the man. However, if we would arise to what is the proper perfection of our intelligent nature, *Reason* must tell us that what is fit and right, must be a rule. And, when we cultivate this higher power, *Reason*; and express a steady regard to its dictates; then are we in that

SERM. state of perfection, which becomes Beings  
 XV. indued with a reasonable nature.

3. *Lastly*, This is most important ; for it is indissolubly connected with our happiness here, and our perfect happiness in another state.

There are natural rewards attending virtue ; and there are natural punishments attending vice ; in this state, as well as in another. We find that, when we act agreeably to the dictates of our consciences, all is calm ; and we feel joy and pleasure. When these laws of reason are infringed, all is tumult, distress and anguish : and horror, beyond what can be described, takes possession of the guilty person. And all the enjoyments of this world cannot dissipate those distresses, or occasion respite to the guilty mind. This is a settled law ; and nothing can hinder those consequences of virtue and vice.

We may, perhaps, see persons plunging into a course of vice, and yet appear gay ; they ride in their coaches, and are attended with trains, whereby their grandeur glitters : and you will imagine that they are extremely happy. But could you pursue



pursue them in all their retreats, or in their SERM. private reflections, you would see *misery*, XV. under all those outward garbs of gaiety. ~~~~~

And how can it be otherwise? because there is always a gnawing within their guilty conscience; a charge of luxury and debauchery, or of injustice and cruelty. And, immediately upon these reflections, all their glittering shows fail, and look languid. Their grandeur cannot make them happy.—— On the contrary, see a man of extensive virtue, in any circumstance; he is calm and serene; always disposed to be true, and just, and kind, so far as he has it in his power. You see him passing thro' life, tho' attended with storms and tempests, yet calm within: and he has serene joy, in his expectations of future happiness. Surely, then, this person must be looked upon, to be in a more happy state than the other.

We find no view of happiness, in this life, but what stands connected with virtue. Vigor of mind, fairness of character and reputation, success in our lawful attempts; all these, and any other that can be named, stand connected with the practice of sincere piety, and extensive virtue.

SERM. And the reverse stands connected with a  
 XV. different temper and behavior; which  
 clouds and darkens the intellectual powers; stains the reputation and character; and lays a foundation of distress from every quarter. And even the regards of *Deity* are not what he can form an expectation of. This is the state, which he, by his unhappy pursuits, brings himself into. But then! *everlasting life* is forfeited; eternal glory is lost. He is not fit for receiving it. If it was conferred upon him, he would not have powers to relish it. Death, eternal death and condemnation; the worm that dieth not; everlasting punishment; and perpetual banishment, from the presence of the *Lord*, are the sad sentences, which *revelation* denounces against such as die impenitent, or under the reigning power of vice.

Now, then, life and death are set before you. You cannot but see, of how great consequence it is for you to receive this law; to attend to it; to be governed by it; in your temper and life; and to express a care to arrive to the likeness of *God*, in your moral character; that you may be happy

happy here, and capable of being for-ever SARM.  
XV.  
happy in the future life.

I shall conclude this discourse, by making two or three remarks.

1. We may, from hence, see the weakness of decrying the preaching upon those things that are of a moral nature, or that are immutable and eternal.

This I have already mentioned; but it deserves to be inculcated.

Surprizing, indeed, to me it is, that any Christians should be offended, when they have the law of GOD opened to them; and the compliance with it pressed. This is of the last consequence to you. Your laying hold of *Christ*; your relying upon him and his merits; your dependence upon that favor, which he expressed in dying; will be of no advantage to you; — unless this instance of his love, which you seem to express so high a value for, has this effect, to bring you to the denying all ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to live soberly, righteously, and godlily, in this world; in this way looking for the blessed hope. Heaven and hell are states. One, that has vice reigning in him, is in the state of

344 *The unchangeable difference*

SERM. hell. And, unless there be a change in

XV. his temper and life, he has incapacitated himself for being happy. We must seek our happiness in our resemblance of God : and, in consequence, have a well-grounded expectation of his favor, in this world; and of the reward, which he has promised, in the future world. Therefore, never enter into any low opinion of this way of preaching, which does make appear, that you cannot be perfect, as *a reasonable Being*, or capable of happiness, without sincere piety, and extensive virtue.

2. Let us not think that the *Christian religion* does, in the least, vacate and annul the original law of God, in our reasonable frame.

Some people are so very weak in their judgments, as to be highly offended, when they hear a minister talk of *natural religion*; and of the duties, that arise from our being intelligent. Certainly, these must be persons of very low understandings. For it is as evident and plain, as any thing can be, that it is *Reason*, which makes us capable of receiving *revelation*. And it is by *Reason* that we are to judge, whether



whether a pretension to revelation is SERM.  
well-grounded, or not. Nay, and it XV.  
is, by *Reason*, that we are capable to de-  
termine and fix a proper sense of this re-  
velation. So that, to abandon *reason*, for  
*revelation*, is to set at variance that, by  
which alone we can be sure, whether what  
pretends to be *a revelation from God*, is  
from him, or not.

3. We may from hence see, what is to  
be our first care.

We are *reasonable Beings*; and it is fit  
we act nothing, till we inquire of our  
consciences, whether it is fitting? There  
is an inward monitor, that will ever give  
right dictates; if we do not stifle, or sup-  
press, its dictates, or admonitions.

To conclude, Let us take care, that  
we never act contrary to our inward prin-  
ciple, in any one instance. Let us ever  
consult our own minds, whether it is right,  
or reasonable, or the will of God? And  
we shall find by this, a peace of mind re-  
sulting, that is preferable to all the posses-  
sions of this world, an inward satisfaction.  
No one can tell the distress of guilt, when  
the

SERM. the mind is truly awakened. The best  
 XV. thing is to avoid this. And, as the first  
 thing is, that we may not be guilty,  
 so the next best thing is, *to repent*. We  
 are still to remember, that the more we  
 pass through this world unstained with  
 guilt, the more easy will our passage be  
 the higher pleasure shall we have, when  
 we quit this world; and the more abun-  
 dant will our entrance be, into the hap-  
 piness of the future world.



S E R M .  
 No one can tell the distance of guilt, when  
 the



S E R M O N XVI.

Moral obligations, easily discerned.



MICAH vi. former part of ver. 8.

He hath shewed thee, O Man,  
what is good; and what doth the  
Lord require of thee?

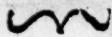


HAVING proposed to treat  
upon the moral duties, which  
we are obliged to prac-  
tise; we have already con-  
sidered the ground, upon  
which moral obligation is founded. And,  
since it appears clear that reasonable Beings  
must be obliged to act reasonably, we can-  
not but apprehend that this is the ground  
of all the obligations of moral conduct.

SERM.  
XVI.

The

SERM. The mind easily sees what is fit; and dis-

XVI. cerns a beauty in acting from some principles; and a deformity in acting by others.

Nothing, I think, is clearer than *that there is a difference in actions: that some appear beautiful and fit; and others, the reverse.* And, whenever the mind sees what is reasonable and fit, it cannot but discern that it is under obligation to act conformably.

From this ground of moral obligation, it appears, that we may practise, in some degree, what is right, without attending to *Deity*; or without regarding any advantage, which will arise from such a conduct, to us. — I say, we may apprehend that a reasonable Being may determine and act reasonably, without a direct regard unto *Deity*, in some instances. Indeed, *moral obligations* cannot be complied with, in a proper compass, without taking in the idea of God: because there are actions, which refer to him; and which appear, upon consideration, fitting and becoming. It is however, proper, nay and even necessary, if we would practise *religious virtue*, or virtue in the fullest extent, to acknowledge *Deity*, and the perfections  
of



of his nature. By *reason*, we become ca- SERM.  
pable of *moral obligation*: and that will, XVI.  
with ease, lead us to the acknowledgement  
of the first cause. Nothing is more certain  
to us than our own existence, and from that  
and the Beings around us, we must begin in  
our search after the first cause.

But, of *the Being and attributes of God*,  
I have already discoursed, at large.

As GOD is a perfect moral agent, he  
must be pleased, whenever any moral agent  
conforms to that rule, which is the measure  
of his own actions. And since he must  
needs approve such a conduct, in the moral  
agents, which he has created, it will (I  
think) clearly follow, that it is his will,  
that they should conform to that, which  
is the rule of the divine conduct.

Here, then, we have another ground  
for complying with *moral obligations*. We  
are (when we see the *obligation*) as *reason-  
able Beings*, obliged to act agreeably. But,  
when we see that *moral obligation* has also  
a respect to GOD; so as that he will ever,  
invariably, act consonantly to what is right  
and fit, we cannot but infer that it is his  
will

SERM. will and pleasure that we, also, should

XVI. comply with what is right and fit.

But this will appear farther, if we consider his creating all Beings; and man, in particular; and his continuing them by his providence.

It is very improper to say, that God makes habitudes, or proportions, or the obligations that arise from seeing the fitness of things. But, I think, we may infer, that, as he has created Beings, placed in such and such relations, and capable of discerning such and such proportions; he has, hereby, declared to us, who are intelligent, that it is his will, that we should act consonantly to these proportions, or fitnesses, which evidently result from the relations, in which we stand. And, if he continues the creatures in this order, and with these relations, or proportions; he thereby plainly intimates that it is his pleasure that the Beings, which he has made capable of moral government, should act consonant to those discoveries which he has made.

But, I think, the argument may still be carried a little farther. We see a compliance

pliance with moral fitnesses, or acting contrary to them, has different effects. When they are practised, happy fruits arise to ourselves, who conform to them; and to others, to whom we are related. And, when these fitnesses are contradicted, there does not fail to spring up very unhappy effects to ourselves and others. Or, in other words, happiness appears to be connected with the practice of moral obligations, taken in their full extent: and, by violating these obligations, misery infallibly does arise, in some measure or degree. Now, since these consequences arise, not only from the nature of things, but from *the will of God*, it cannot but be owned that hereby God has discovered to us what he requires of us: and that moral obligations are his will; and what we are to comply with, in consequence of his authority, or positive command.

SERM.

XVI.

Thus I have led you to an acknowledgement of *Deity*, upon an argument, that lies easy and clear; and have set before you such views of the rule of the divine actions, as make it appear undeniably evident,

SERM. dent, that *Deity* itself will ever act consonantly to the fitnesses of things: and that, therefore, it is his pleasure that the Beings, which he has made capable of moral government, should regard *moral obligations*; not only from the reason of things; but inasmuch as it appears to be the positive command of the creator and governor of the world. And, inasmuch as he has made happiness and misery, in a very considerable degree, to depend upon our conforming to *moral obligations*, or violating them; it is, from thence, farther evident, that it is his pleasure, that we should practise conformably to moral obligation. There is no occasion to consider which of these principles is to have the preference. This, I believe, would be of no great advantage. It is sufficient that we see, we are obliged to regard *moral obligations*, both from *reason*, and from the will of the *Divine Being*.

I now come to make remarks upon what has been said.

I. This will evince, to every considerate person, the malignity of acting contrary to *moral obligations*.

Though



Though some neglect to consider the **SERM.** importance of *moral obligations*, nothing is **XVI** more plain, than that, when they are violated and infringed, there is a great stain and blemish, which attends such a character. For reasonable Beings to act unreasonably, must be debasing the dignity of their nature; and acting unbecomingly those excellent powers, with which we are indued. But besides; whenever we act contrary to moral obligations, we reflect a dishonor upon the very rule of the *Divine* action; and upon that, which appears evidently to be the will of our creator. Surely; both these reflections must, if carefully considered, represent the deformity of vice and the beauty of holiness.

When we are virtuous, in a proper extent, we attain that, which is the true excellency of our intelligent nature; and that, by which we resemble the first, all-perfect moral agent. When we act contrary; we reject that, which is the rule of the *Divine* action; and that, which is the will of our creator. We should, ever, in all our behavior, take care not to contemn the authority of him that made us. He

SERM. has given us Being in the highest rank of  
 XVI. existents, in this part of the creation. If  
 we are regardless of his Favor, we act  
 disagreeably to that gift of God, which is  
 the highest in this formation of things.  
 We act in a disloyal way to him, who  
 is our sovereign and lord. We act with  
 the highest dissingenuity and ingratitude.  
 For it is from him, that we receive our  
 Beings; and from him, that every thing,  
 which we enjoy, hath taken its rise. We  
 act what is the highest folly, against our  
 own happiness. For the way, which he  
 has discovered, is, that happiness must arise  
 from the observance; and misery, from a  
 disregard, of his laws. You see, then,  
 that both grounds of performing moral  
 obligations, tend to give us a right sense  
 of the deformity of vice and the beauty of  
 virtue.

2. I would remark, how absurd and  
 unreasonable it is, that obligations of a  
*moral* nature, referring to God, should, by  
 any persons, be spoken of, with contempt.

I would hope that there are none so in-  
 consistent, as, when they recommend *jus-*  
*tice* to men, will speak meanly of the  
 obli-

obligations, which refer to *Deity*. If this SERM.  
is the conduct of any, the absurdity of it XVI.  
will easily appear. The powers, by which  
I become capable of moral government,  
lead me, with great facility, to the ac-  
knowlegement of the first, all-perfect,  
moral agent. And, from right ideas of  
the rule of the *Divine* conduct, it is evi-  
dent, that I can discern that his will is one  
ground of my being obliged to practise  
moral virtue. And it is extremely clear,  
that fitnesses, also, constitute an obligation.  
And, when the mind sees them, there  
will result a moral obligation refering to  
*Deity*; as obligations of *justice* and *good-  
ness* arise, in our conduct to one another.  
And both these obligations are grounded  
upon the same foundation, of *fitnesses*. It  
is very unreasonable, therefore, for any to  
express an inclination to be directed by fit-  
nesses, in regard to their conduct to one  
another: and lay aside the obligation, which  
arises from fitnesses, as they stand related  
to the first, all-perfect mind.

But it is very likely, I shall have occa-  
sion to speak of this, more largely, when

SERM. I come to consider *moral obligations* which  
XVI. refer to GOD.

3. I would remark that *reason* is a *prior obligation*, and *the will of God* a secondary.

And yet, as it appears evident, *Religious virtue* is founded upon taking in *Deity*: and moral obligation, understood in the utmost extent, will include the first, all-perfect, moral agent.

There is no reason why we should regard one ground, and disregard the other.

4. I have already intimated, that, when the mind sees the obligation resulting from fitness, this obligation does engage the man to practise suitably; though there should be no advantage arising from it. But we may, from what we have now offered, observe farther, that there are advantages attending the practice of moral obligations; and disadvantages, in practising what is contrary. And these do unavoidably spring from what we have attempted to prove, *viz.* that the practice of moral obligations is the will and pleasure of GOD: that he approves of those, who act suitably to them; and disapproves the contrary. Now,  
this



this being evident, it follows, that he will distinguish, by favors, those that conform to the rule of his conduct. And, if he will distinguish one from the other, by favor, it is evident that there will arise an idea of rewards and punishments. SERM.  
XVI.

When we refer to the first ground of moral obligation, viz. *fitnesses*; there is not included in that, rewards and punishments. But, when these moral obligations are considered as the will of the universal creator and governor; and what he must be pleased with; it appears, then, beyond dispute, that there will arise, from acting what is pleasing to the creator, rewards; and there will result punishment, to those that act the contrary. And, indeed, this is very clear; and, I think, evident beyond dispute.

By the government of God, or by his providence, we see that he has constituted things, in such a manner, as that he, who practises moral virtue, has pleasure and happiness resulting: and that those, who act the contrary, feel uneasiness, misery, and distress. It is certain that a moral agent, or an agent under moral government, when

SERM. he sees what is fit, .is, in consequence,

XVI. obliged to practise it; and, when he does  
 { comply, he has pleasure in his own mind.

Again; we shall find, if we carefully look into the argument farther, that God has ordered it so, that, when we practise moral virtue, there is not only the pleasure of *self-approbation*; but there are very happy effects, arising from it, to all the interests we are capable of, or can be concerned in. As we are *sensible*, we find *sobriety* and *temperance* to have favorable influences upon the vigor of the body and our external possessions or enjoyments. And we feel no virtue, but what has the happiest effect upon the mind. Now those external blessings must arise, evidently, from *the will of God*. For there is no connection between sensible pleasures and the conscious principle. If we trace the reason of such an establishment, we shall be led to see, that it results from *the will of God*. And, when this appears, I think no one, but will grant, that there are rewards, which are the effect of the divine will, attending our present conformity to moral obligations. We may and ought to suppose

suppose the obligation to be antecedent to SERM.  
 any advantage. However; the wise crea- XVI.  
 tor and governor did not think it proper  
 to leave us, moral agents, in this imperfect  
 state, without sufficient motives: and,  
 therefore, he has in the very settlement  
 and constitution of things, ordered it so,  
 that there should be a connection between  
 the conformity to moral obligations, and  
 the pleasures, which we are fited to re-  
 ceive, arising from the union of our body  
 to our conscious principle. Now, as re-  
 wards and punishments arise from *the will*  
*of God*, they are clear proofs, that it is  
 his pleasure, that we should conform to  
 that, which will be immutably the rule of  
 his own actions.

I might procede to shew you, from the  
 state of things, that there will be rewards,  
 in another state: but that will detain me  
 too long at present. And I have, already,  
 done it elsewhere,

Give me leave to recommend to you a  
 steady pursuit of acting agreeably to all *mo-*  
*ral obligations*, from the reason and fitness  
 of things; and from its being the will and

SERM. pleasure of our creator. It is evident that

XVI. it is his positive command: and it is that,  
 which appears to arise from our capacity  
 of imitating the first, all-perfect, moral  
 agent.

Let us remember that there are not only  
 natural rewards, arising from virtue; but  
 there are also positive rewards; and even in  
 this world. I mean, by *positive*, such as  
 do not appear to stand immediately con-  
 nected with acting virtuously; but are the  
 result of the *Divine* pleasure, in consti-  
 tuting things in such a manner. And  
 when we see that acting conformably to  
 moral obligations, is necessary to render us  
 happy: and that, if we express a behavior,  
 suitable to all moral duties, we shall find  
 and feel ourselves in circumstances of feli-  
 city; — Let us be prevailed upon, not  
 only to put an high rate upon moral obli-  
 gations; but to practise them with steddi-  
 ness. Hereby we shall be like him, who  
 is the *most perfect Being*; and act agreeably  
 to the dignity of our make and nature,  
 Hereby we shall feel happiness; and that  
 in some degree proportioned to our con-  
 formity



*easily discerned.*

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formity to moral obligations, in their pro-  
per extent.

SERM.  
XVI.

If, we would be like to GOD : or if we are desirous of attaining real happiness; this is the pursuit, that we must enter upon. Let us, therefore, study to know what GOD requires of us. Let us express the highest diligence, in order to arrive to a right and extensive apprehension of those duties, that arise to us, from our very frame.

Hereby we shall become more perfect and more happy, in this state: and be made meet for a state of durable and complete happiness, in a future world.



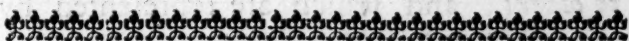
S E R-





## S E R M O N XVII.

A summary of moral obligations.



TITUS ii. 12.

*We should live soberly, righteously,  
and godlily, in this present  
world.*



HAVING shown you that **SERM.**  
moral duties arise from the **XVII.**  
reason and fitness of things;  
and are, also, agreeable to  
*the will of God*; I pro-  
ceede, now, to give you a  
general view of the *moral obligations*, which  
we, as reasonable Beings, are under.

The

SERM. The words, which I have read, will  
 XVII. lay a very just foundation for a discourse  
 on this subject.

I. I begin with those moral duties, which refer to *ourselves*; and which are expressed by the term *Soberly*.

II. I shall consider the duties, that refer to *others*; and which are represented by the term *righteously*. And,

III. *Lastly*, The duties, that refer to God; which are here represented by the term *godlily*.

I. I shall endeavor to lay before you, the *moral duties*, that refer to *ourselves*.

Nothing is more evident, as we find ourselves in Being, and possessed of such powers, than that it is congruous and fit, and consequently our duty, that we preserve ourselves, in the best manner we can, in the fittest and properest temper to perform all the offices, which arise from our relation to *others* and to God.

It cannot but, from hence, appear highly fit that we should practise temperance and *sobriety*, taken in the strictest sense of the



the word : and that we should rein our SERM.  
passions and appetites ; since, without such XVII.  
a regulation, we shall find ourselves not  
in a condition, in so perfect a manner, as  
we might, to perform the *moral obligations*  
to God and others.

But, inasmuch as we feel in ourselves a  
propensity to what appears *good* ; and an  
aversion to what is *evil*, either real, or  
imaginary ; we shall find there will, by a  
due attention to these principles which  
are in us, several *moral obligations* arise,  
which have a respect to *ourselves*.

We find, by reflection, that there are  
two kinds of *good*, which refer to our  
selves ; the one regards the *mind*, or that  
conscious principle, which we experience in  
ourselves ; the other regards the *body*. In  
consequence, there is a preference to be  
given to what, upon cool reflection, shall  
appear to be *good* to that higher principle  
of consciousness, above what respects the  
*body*.

It is reasonable that our minds should have  
their proper empire ; that they should be  
sovereigns : since the mind is the highest  
power, which is imparted to us. Nothing,  
then,

SERM. then, can be more disagreeable and unfit,  
 XVII. than that a reasonable Being should be continually engaged in providing for the body; and the mind left intirely uncultivated and unimproved.

There is a *good*, that is *temporal*: or, at least, it appears to us in that light. And to this we feel a very strong inclination. *Temporal good* may be divided into the gratifications of the Senses; or the possessions of this world; or the esteem of our fellow creatures, and of the honors that we receive from them.

Our desires of these differ in degrees. And a little reflection will convince us, that the mind is to regulate and direct us to express a care that they may be kept within due bounds. And, in consequence, there will arise, from this reflection, a moderation in our desires and pursuits after the pleasures, or interests, or honors, of this life. And, as we have such bents, so we have averfions placed in us, arising from an apprehension of evil.

When we conceive any thing under the idea of *evil*, we shun it. And yet every one, upon reflection, must see that, in all  
 circum-

circumstances, it is not reasonable and fit to avoid what may appear to us, at first view, as *evil*. If our country and liberty demand of us the hazard of our lives; and we cannot secure what is most valuable, without running some risks; *Reason*, which is the higher power, is to direct us what *evils* we may, as reasonable Beings, shun; and what, with bravery, we may and ought to meet. And it is evident, that the desire of what appears *good* to us; and avoiding of what has a shew of evil; give rise to various passions, which we feel placed in our nature. And the government of these is a part of the duty comprehended in what is called *Sobriety*.

When we apprehend any thing *good*, we desire it; we pursue it. When we attain it, we feel joy. And so, when we lose what we pressed after as *good*, we feel sorrow. When *good* is at a distance, we desire it: when present, we rejoice in the possession of it. When it is taken from us, we feel grief. In like manner, when the *evil*, which we shun, is at a distance, it occasions fear; if present, distress. These are the affections, in general, which are to

SERM.  
XVII.

SERM. to be governed. And we can never attain  
 XVII. a reasonable character, without arriving  
 to some degree, at least, of self-govern-  
 ment.

I now procede to the

II<sup>d</sup> Branch of *moral obligations*; viz. those which refer to *others*; and which the apostle here expresses by the term, *righteously*.

The duties, which we are obliged to practise to *others*, are *justice* and *equity*, *beneficence* and *goodness*.

Nothing is more evident than that we are obliged to act to others, as we apprehend it reasonable, in like circumstances, for them to act to us. There is not a maxim in the mathematics, that is clearer, or more evident, than this obligation, which we are under, in our behavior to others. It appears with the greatest perspicuity; when we consider that we are equals. And, tho' there are differences of external circumstances, there will not arise much difficulty; if we put ourselves in the characters of others, from whom we expect what is just and equal.

In



In as much as *justice* is a disposition to do what is right and equal, it will be proper, in order to see this, in the fullest compass, to consider what rights we have, upon apprehending that we are *equals*. For whatever right a person has a claim to, it would be unjust in another to infringe. Now this will be evident, if we consider what every one has a just pretension to. We shall find, upon inquiry, that every man has an unalienable right, in matters of *religion*, to judge for himself. And, I think, there cannot be a greater instance of invading, unjustly, the rights of mankind, than for any set of men, fewer, or of a greater number, to set up a standard; and to imagine that they, meeting together, can settle such propositions, and such a sense of the sacred writings, as shall bind and oblige the consciences of others. And, in consequence, every the least attempt to persecute, for different sentiments, must be an high instance of injustice. What is remarkable in this right, is, that we cannot pass it over to another; we cannot transfer it. When we have tried our utmost, we shall easily see that we must determine

SERM. and judge the truth and falshood, the right  
XVII. and fitness, of our own ideas.

It is true, indeed, in many instances, falshood is taken for truth, and superstition for religion: but yet, it cannot be otherwise conceived, than that every one has a just pretension to judge of truth and falshood, for himself. It is certain that every one ought to improve his mind; and to gain as just a sense of things, as he possibly can. But the society has nothing to do with his opinions. If any infringe the laws, *that* lays them open to the sentence of the laws. They are, and ought to be, treated as breakers of the peace of civil society. And the duty of the civil magistrate is no other than to keep the peace, and to secure every one in their right and property.

Besides this right of thinking for ourselves, we find that we have a claim of right upon our *bodies*. And whoever attempts to hurt them, or injure them, must be guilty of acting contrary to right and equity. This every one has a claim to; unless he forfeits it, to society, by violating

ing the laws, which are made for the good and preservation of the society. SERM.  
XVII.

Another right is that, which every one has to his property; whether derived from his ancestors, or friends; or gained by his honest industry. Without doubt, every one must see that it would be unjust for any, in an open and forcible, or in a clandestine, manner, to lessen the property of any.

We have a right to reputation and character; if we have not forfeited it, by acting contrary to those duties, which refer to the preservation of society. And, for this reason, to wound the characters of others, must be contrary to what is right and just. And, I think, there need not much to convince any of the truth of this. For it is only changing the persons, and then asking their own consciences, "Whether they would be pleased with slander, or invidious insinuations?" There is a great deal of injustice, in the world, springing from this. They imagine no evil, when they can palliate the offence, artfully to hurt; or insinuate, to asperse another's

B b 2

character.

SERM. character. And, in such a manner, they  
XVII. shall convey the worst of characters.

Thus you see how we should act what is just, and how we must not infringe the duties that result from the obligation of practising equity and justice.

Another part of our duty to others is *beneficence*, or *goodness*; which, undoubtedly, every one must see it fit for us to practise. It arises from our make, and the present circumstances we are in.

Nothing is clearer than that a person, who has good-will to all in his make, has a character that will ever appear bright. And whoever expresses beneficence and goodness, will be *the darling and favorite of men*. From a king to a peasant, there is a reference of one to another. There is all imaginable reason, therefore, that I should, by all proper ways, abate the unhappiness of all around me; and contribute, as much as I can, to their happiness.

III. I come now to consider, the offices that refer to God.

And



And here I cannot but take notice, that there is a set of persons, in this age, who are willing enough to allow of justice towards men; but will not take in any *moral obligations relating to Deity*. They say, "God is perfect and happy in himself: and our goodness does not extend to him: nor can our follies lessen his happiness."

I grant it; but are there not evidently duties, arising from the relation that we stand in to God; which are as reasonable, as any offices, that we think binding upon us, in our conduct to others? If you say, "The foundation of moral virtue is social affections, as well as self-love, or self-affection:" We will admit it. But can we imagine that *Deity* has planted in us affections, that are social: and that he has so ordered it, that, when these are carefully cultivated, and we act suitably, there is high pleasure? And is he not a Being, that deserves to be thanked for the beauty and excellence that appears in our frame? What! never offer a tribute of praise to the creator and governor of the

SERM. world, who has formed us with such con-

XVII. summate wisdom and goodness?

I imagine that there can be no possible ground of *moral virtue*, but will lead us to see that there are obligations, arising from the relation, which we stand in, to God. It is certain that our practice does not affect him: but what then? Is it reasonable, fit, and proper, that we should regard *Deity*, in order to our attaining the excellency of a reasonable nature, which is our distinguishing character? If it be; cannot you see how acceptable it must be to the first, all-perfect, moral agent, that you should act what is reasonable and becoming, as you are related to him, as the creator and governor of all?

But why should I dwell any longer upon an argument, that is so clear, that all the ground of *morality* must be subverted, if this be not granted? I shall, therefore, procede to the duties, which refer to God.

We must know ourselves, and him to whom we give the name of God; and attend to his perfections; and endeavor to see,

see, with clearness, the *obligations*, which SERM.  
arise, in our behavior to him. XVII.

That we have powers capable of some knowlege, no one will deny. For every person phancies that he has his share of knowlege and understanding, with the rest of mankind. We will, therefore, suppose that these powers are to be exercised, and imployed. Now, what object is more worthy of having these faculties imployed upon it, than he, that is all-perfection?

Can we imagine that, when we contemplate the harmony, which appears in the creation, we can be more improved? And that, by attending unto him, who is the author of all these beauties, and is himself the highest and first *beauty*, there is no improvement? As we feel, then, this power, we cannot but see it fit, that we should, at least sometimes, think of our creator and constant benefactor, who is the spring of every excellency. When we consider that we have an admirable object, which is rare and uncommon; that has a striking beauty, exciting surprize and wonder; we attend to it with diligence and care. Why

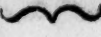
SERM. Should we not, then, have like attention  
XVII. excited in us, when we contemplate the  
immensity, the unbounded knowlege, and  
the consummate wisdom of God? And,  
when we trace his perfections in our  
thoughts and meditations, why may we  
not have admiration excited in us? We  
think a man exceding stupid, that does not  
find raised in himself an esteem of an artist,  
who discovers exquisite skill, in a fine  
piece of architecture; or a most beautiful  
piece of painting; that has design and or-  
der, and figures which are admirably well  
placed. We feel that is a just founda-  
tion for esteem. And shall we not think  
this to be an obligation upon us, when  
we contemplate the greatest and most per-  
fect wisdom? when we trace every thing,  
that he has made, and see that there is ex-  
quisite skill; beyond that which the most  
perfect artist can ever display? Have we  
not reason for an high esteem of him that  
has such unlimited and boundless perfec-  
tions? When we behold one excellently  
beneficent; that lays out all his powers to  
make those, that are in the same nature  
with him, happy; has not this a power to  
attract



attract love? Would we not imagine him SERM.  
 to have no just sentiments, who does not XVII.  
 see the beauty of such a character? And yet  
 we can look on innumerable instances of  
 the *Divine* bounty, and not have suitable  
 affections raised in us. Without all doubt,  
*goodness* demands love. And, where-  
 ever it appears free and disinterested, noble  
 and generous, a return of love is most rea-  
 sonable. And pray; why not to God?  
 Is he not intirely without any view of in-  
 terest? Does he not sustain you every mo-  
 ment? and adapt external objects to your  
 powers? and connect pleasure with what  
 is innocent and virtuous? And would you  
 let all this pass disregarded? or considered  
 in a slight manner? Surely; such a con-  
 duct to a remarkable benefactor, you  
 would think monstrous. It is equally  
 monstrous to express a regard to those a-  
 mong men, that are good; and yet quite  
 overlook the innumerable instances of *Di-*  
*vine love* to mankind.

We feel in us, when we do any thing  
 contrary to the good of society, a sense of  
 fear, what the conduct of others may be  
 to us; and especially, if we have infringed  
 a civil

SERM. a civil law. Now, why are we not afraid of  
XVII. *Deity*; especially when we venture upon  
breaking his laws? You will say "that  
"dread and fear have been the rise of *superstition*." But hold! Is there no fear  
due to the great Being? Ought there not  
to be a fear to offend a kind, and wise,  
and good, Being? There may be a super-  
stitious dread of *Deity*, that may excite  
numberless expressions of superstition: but  
does it follow, that there is no reverence  
to be paid to that Being, who is of a per-  
fect character, and willing to do us good?  
We cannot but feel in ourselves a disposi-  
tion to imitate what is excellent. Such a  
character is beautiful; such a behavior has  
an inexpressible amiableness in it. This  
we teach youth; and with a good deal of  
reason. But do we imitate the first,  
all-perfect Being? We have powers to at-  
tain a resemblance of him. Are we soli-  
citous to be like him, who has all possible  
perfection? Surely; it must appear rea-  
sonable; and, therefore, our duty; to  
transcribe into our dispositions, those per-  
fections of *Deity*, that are imitable by us.  
He will ever, invariably, act what is true,  
right,

right, beneficent, and good. Upon the SERM.  
whole; why should we not see ourselves XVII.  
under obligations of attempting to be like   
him, in universal righteousness and bene-  
ficence?

When we behold a man of a beneficent  
temper, we find in ourselves expectations  
of benefit from him; especially when in  
circumstances of trial and difficulty. There  
is, I say, a disposition to hope for the fa-  
vor of another, in proportion to his moral  
character. And is it not fit that we should  
place a trust and confidence in the first  
Being, who (we know) has all-perfection?  
A Being that is not to be moved to do  
wrong, or to neglect what is right? a Be-  
ing, who knows our wants; who is wise  
to extricate us out of difficulty, whose  
power is uncontroulable; and, of conse-  
quence, he is an object, in which we should  
place our trust and hope. But we are not  
to hope for any favor from him, in a way  
different from what he has prescribed by  
*reason and revelation.*

We observe, in ourselves, that we are  
disposed to what may tend to the happi-  
ness of others, whom we converse with.

This

SERM. This must be in *Deity*, in the highest degree. And therefore it must be agreeable to his will that we cultivate this; and be merciful even as our heavenly father is merciful.

Thus you see that there are plain *moral obligations* arising to *Deity*. We ought to make him the object of our esteem: and, when we know that he is an object that has all excellency in him, it is proper that we should worship him, and express such an esteem of him, as to avoid whatever we know to be disagreeable. When we consider him as the author of our powers, we should make him our last end. We cannot but see it proper to pray to him. It is fit that we should celebrate his praises, and adore his goodness, for those innumerable expressions of beneficence, that he has conferred upon us. It is highly proper to depend upon him, and fear him; and to avoid offending him. As we know that he desires our happiness, we should make him the supreme object of our love. He is our creator, preserver, and governor: and, as such we should behave towards him.

We



We shall find that these obligations will arise with the fullest and strongest evidence. Indeed, unless these are looked upon to be binding, no obligations can be laid firm and solid.

SERM.  
XVII.  
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Give me leave to take notice of the general terms, which the scripture makes use of; and in which we are to comprehend all these *moral duties*: *repentance, obedience, holiness, walking in the light*, and other expressions; which are always to be supposed as designed to comprehend and include all *moral obligations*.

I shall not detain you any longer; but only make some reflections; and so conclude.

I. Let us take care not to contract our duties. We had better, by half, abate in our *Creed*, than in the practice of these *moral obligations*, which we are under to God, others, and ourselves. The last design of our *Creed* is, to make us *holy*. And we should express a care that we do not confine our obligations. I am afraid that this is the case, when people read of being *sober*; they mean only that they should

SERM. should avoid one particular vice. They
 XVII. do not see how many duties are included
 in the term, *Sobriety*.

Let me therefore, caution you,

2. That, whenever you read general words, in revelation, you immediately go into all the particulars. *Ex. gr. Holiness* implies a being separate from every vice, and engaged in the practice of all *moral obligations*. Let us, therefore, take care that we do not suffer ourselves to be imposed upon, by general terms.

3. I would observe, That there are some difficulties in attaining a good degree of a *moral character*.

If we offend deliberately, in one grand line of morality, we lose the character, and have no reason to hope that we shall be happy in another state. Nothing is clearer than that, if any deliberately and coolly, and prevailingly, practise vice, he cannot be virtuous. For what is *virtue*; but a disposition ever to do what is right and fit?

To conclude: Let us in earnest set about to practise *moral duties*, in their proper

per compass. Let us look into ourselves. SERM.
It is very strange that we should look so XVII.
much abroad, and so little at home. Persons condemn that in others, which they are guilty of, themselves. How comes this to pass? Is there not some rule given you of right and fitness? Why do not you censure your own actions, as you do those of others? By this practice, we should soon come to virtuous dispositions. It is not one virtue that will denominate the character. We must gain a settled temper, and fixed complection of mind, to act what is right and fit, in every circumstance.

We may easily see the reason why true religion has been set aside, and a false one brought in, in its room. Certain it is that it has been the art of *Princes* and *priests*, to make that appear religious, which is easy and most grateful; and can be complied with, with the greatest facility. *Moral virtue* will take up the utmost care and diligence: it requires great toil and labor. This culture of the mind will fill up a great part of your time and thoughts: and it is the best spent time of any. We all
see

SERM. see the beauty of the virtuous character;

XVH. whether we practise virtue, or no.



Persons may call it prudent and politic to mind temporal affairs, though they violate the rules both of the law and of the prophets: Their power, and riches, and spendor may now bear them out. But, let them drop into the grave: and then see, whether their moral character will bear the light.

It is, unquestionably, our duty to act what is agreeable to truth and right.





S E R M O N XVIII.

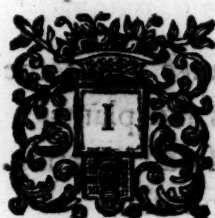
Moral obligations, to ourselves.

The second sermon on this text.



TITUS ii. 12. I now I

*We should live soberly, righteously,
and godlily, in this present
world.*



N our last discourse, we **SERM.**
gave you a short plan of all **XVIII.**
the *moral obligations*, in
reference to *ourselves*, to
others, and to God.

I now come to consider, in a more particular manner, the duties, that refer to ourselves.

There are some duties, which terminate only in ourselves. And there are others,

VOL. II.

C c

that

SERM. that chiefly refer to *ourselves*; but take in XVIII. a respect to others.

~~~~~ In order to treat this subject with clearness, it will be proper that I give you a representation of our Make; and the circumstances, in which we are introduced into life. For it is impossible to settle aright the offices, that have a respect to *ourselves*: unless we form a clear and distinct idea of our make and frame.

I. I would remark that, with regard to our *bodies*, we are subject to the same laws, which relate to mere matter.

We find that we have such a frame of *body*, as that it is subject to gravitation, and liable to be divided, and to have its parts separated and displaced.

II. There is a resemblance (in some respects) between our bodies and plants.

We have our rise from a small beginning. We grow, flourish, decay, and die.

III. It is farther to be taken notice of, that we have organized bodies; in which there are such senses, as impart pleasure and pain. And, by these inlets to the mind, the conscious principle is capable of forming

ing ideas of the material world. And, in-  
asmuch as, by these powers, pleasure and  
pain are experienced by us, from these  
diversities of passions; whatever appears  
to have a power to give pleasure, we look  
upon as *good*: and what gives pain, as *evil*.  
And whatever not only has a power to  
impart present pleasure; but that can put  
it in our power from thence to attain  
pleasure hereafter, we esteem *good*. As,  
on the contrary, what will hereafter cause  
pain, we regard as *evil*.

Now, we find that we have a desire to  
that which is *good*, or what we apprehend  
so; as having a capacity, some way or  
other, of communicating pleasure to us.  
From hence arises a propensity to that  
which we conceive *good*; and of shunning  
whatever we conceive to be capable of  
giving us pain; or lessening our pleasure.  
And, as we find that there are pleasures  
of a different nature; so there will be dif-  
ferent kinds of good apprehended by us.

There are pleasures springing from the  
senses, which we call *sensible delights*. And,  
since we have so strong a bent to such  
pleasures, as the enjoyments of this world

SERM. are supposed capable of imparting, we  
 XVIII. generally call them *good*. And, since the  
 esteem of others does impart pleasure,  
 there is a strong bent in us to character,  
 reputation, esteem and honor. And yet  
 we shall find that all these are to be under  
 a proper regulation; which brings us under  
 distinct, moral obligations.

We shall find, from a sense of *pain*,  
 that there is a strong aversion to what we  
 apprehend to be *evil*. When we see it at  
 a distance we avoid it. When it is present  
 (unless care be taken to prevent it) we ap-  
 pear exceedingly uneasy.

To know what is evil; what we are  
 to avoid, and what we are encouraged to  
 meet; to be apprized how we are to con-  
 duct ourselves when *evil* befalls us; and  
 what proper uses to make of it; — will  
 lead us to consider several duties, which  
 come under those offices that refer to *our-*  
*selves*.

IV. I would take notice, that we have  
 a *principle of consciousness* in us, by which  
 we can perceive ideas, compare them one  
 with another, abstract them; and find such  
 rules



rules as, from their being fit and reasonable, SERM.  
are binding and obligatory upon us. XVIII.

This is the highest power, that we, by reflection, can find in our make. For, by this, we are capable of reasoning about things past, or future; without being obliged to attend to present circumstances only.

V. We find also a power, by which we can determine and begin action; which I call *Liberty*.

It is very plain that, in our make, we are formed so, as that we partake of some of the properties, and are subject to some of the same laws, with the Beings below us.

And, as we are capable of pleasure and pain; and feel passions in us, which are to be under direction; so we find higher powers, that see what is fit, and that can direct and govern. We have a capacity of acting; and, without this, we could not properly be *moral agents*.

VI. We may observe some of the circumstances, which attend our being introduced into this world; as that we are borne weak, and incapable of helping our-

SERM. selves; and in very different circumstances  
XVIII. of life.

Our powers are narrow; and we are introduced into a world, where there are persons of a great variety of circumstances.

This is what, I think, every one must allow to be, at least, an imperfect description of our frame and state:

Now let me from hence deduce all the duties that refer to *ourselves*.

1. It is certain that, as we are capable of pleasure and pain (or happiness and misery) and have a strong bent to one, and a disposition to shun the other; it follows that we are obliged to pursue happiness; or that it is highly fit that we should seek pleasure of every kind; unless there be a reason to the contrary.

2. From the higher powers of intelligence and agency, I would infer, that it is a duty incumbent upon Beings of such a frame, that they cultivate and improve (in a manner agreeable to the circumstances, in which they are placed) the superior or higher powers, which are granted to them.

3. I would

3. I would infer, from this superiority SERM.  
of our *Reason*, that it is our duty to take XVIII.  
care that *Reason* hold the reins, and be  
constantly allowed the supremacy.

4. I would infer that, since there are  
*passions*; and *Reason*, which is the higher  
power, is given to govern them; it is our  
duty to rein and check them, when they  
are excited by improper objects; or im-  
moderate and excessive in their degree.  
And, inasmuch as afflictions spring from  
pleasure, or what we apprehend to be good;  
there will arise, from hence, an obligation  
of temperance, sobriety, and purity. And,  
in regard we feel a desire after the things  
of this world, as they impart pleasure; and  
that may be immoderate; we cannot but  
see, that it is a duty incumbent upon Be-  
ings, in our state, to attain, by moderation,  
a well governed desire, and a regular pur-  
suit, of the injoyments of this world. And,  
inasmuch as we desire esteem and honor,  
and that is to be governed; we shall find  
that there will result from thence, an ob-  
ligation to *modesty*.

We shall easily see farther, that since,  
in some circumstances, reason will teach

SERM. us not to avoid *pain*; or to express an un-  
 XVIII. due conduct, when we fall under *evil*;

we shall discern an obligation to rein fear, and to govern ourselves, becoming the rank we hold, under present evil. This, without doubt, will appear fit and becoming Beings of our make.

5. Since we are agents, and formed not only for contemplation, but for action; there will arise from hence a duty, that will be incumbent upon all, to exercise diligence, and to use application; in opposition to sinking into *indolence*; which is one of the worst of vices.

6, *Lastly*. From this view of human nature, it will follow, that we are obliged to be content, in every circumstance, in which the providence of God may have placed us.

Since we are introduced into this state, by free goodness; and in circumstances, differing one from another; it cannot but be obligatory to express a proper satisfaction, in that rank and order, in which the great creator has placed us. — These are all obligations that refer to *ourselves*,

As



As for *anger*, which partly respects our-  
selves, and partly has a regard to others; SERM.  
XVIII.  
I shall consider it, under those passions,  
that spring from a desire to avoid *evil*.

These obligations I shall discourse upon,  
distinctly.

I. Since we have a sense of pleasure and  
a sense of pain, and the one we pursue  
and the other we avoid: and, as pleasure  
is happiness; and we think it reasonable  
to pursue happiness; — there will arise  
this principle of action, “ that we preserve  
“ ourselves in the best capacity of being  
“ happy, that is in our power; and that  
“ we do not think it any way unbecoming  
“ us to receive pleasure of any kind; pro-  
“ vided there is not some sufficient reason  
“ against it.”

I need not recommend this duty to you.  
For certainly, every one must find with-  
in himself a bent to pursue happiness; and  
which he has ever in view, in all his dif-  
ferent scenes and pursuits. No doubt but  
the will of God is expressed to us in our  
very make. We cannot but see that there  
is, in us, a constant care to avoid *evil*, and  
to pursue what we apprehend to be *good*.

This

SERM. This works in us with the greatest stead-  
XVIII. diness and constancy. And we cannot but

~ apprehend, that it must be the will of God; that we should pursue happiness; or what is the reason why God has given us ideas of happiness, agreeable and proper for us, and for our make, in this state?

2. I have represented to you, that, upon reflection, we find our bodies subject to the same laws, to which matter is liable. We are liable to the law of *gravitation*: and some parts of the body may be divided and displaced. But the creator has, with great skill and goodness, annexed the idea of *pain*, to whatever is hurtful, or destructive to the body: and he has added a sense of *pleasure* to what contributes to the happiness of our make.

It must be acknowledged, indeed, that, through wrong perceptions, we may have some pleasure arising from the senses, which may not tend really to the good of the frame. These are super-induced. If we would follow *simple nature*, we should ever find pleasure connected with what is proper to continue and preserve the frame. However; nothing can be clearer, than that  
God

God has annexed *pleasure* to what is for SERM. the good of our make; and *pain* to what XVIII. is destructive of it: And he has hereby taught us, that it is becoming our character, in his creation, to use every method to guard against danger and pain; and to secure to ourselves as much pleasure, in consequence, as we can enjoy, consistently with the fitness of things, and the pleasures of another nature.

It is certain that, as our reasoning faculties are the highest and most noble powers, that we are in possession of; in the use of them, there does arise *pleasure*, greater than any springing from the senses. For which reason, when we weigh pleasure and pain, and compare one with the other; there will arise, often, a reasonable restraint to those pleasures, which take their rise from the senses. However; what I would infer, is, that God has discovered to us, in our very make, that he designed, in his creation and government, happiness to us; and that, therefore, we cannot be any way criminal, in taking a wise and reasonable care to preserve and continue ourselves in Being.

But

SERM.

XVIII.

But here it is objected, “ that some both antient and modern philosophers have asserted *that we may destroy our powers, and step out of this life, before the command of the governor calls us out of it.*”

This was the opinion of the stoics and of a late writer : but I think it extremely absurd and ill-grounded. For most of the antient philosophers, with great justness, have remarked that *self-murder* was a crime of an enormous nature. They represented that, if any, by a commander, is placed in an office, or station, of difficulty ; and quits that office, or station, before his governor, or supreme officer, grants him leave ; such a conduct in a soldier would be looked upon, as criminal. And why should we think that we have power to desert our station, till the creator, who has placed us in it, calls us off?

But it will be farther urged, “ Why is it put in our power to quit life ; if it was not what *Deity* willed?”

This argument has no manner of force in it. For the meaning is, “ Why were we made mortal ; or liable to death ; and exposed to so many occasions of our  
 — dissolu-



“dissolution?” It appears clear to me, SERM.  
that God does design us happiness: and XVIII.  
that we, in consequence, when we feel our-  
selves engaged in the pursuit of it, should  
regard it as our duty to preserve ourselves  
in the best manner we can.

Again; it may be objected, “that this  
“is founded upon the law of preservation:  
“and that, as putting an end to this life,  
“in some cases, tends to happiness; may  
“there not be such circumstances, as to  
“make it appear no way disagreeable to  
“the will of the creator, to step out of  
“life, before we are called to quit our  
“station; if we apprehend that we have  
“more misery than happiness?”

I answer, This will not justify *self-*  
*murder*; unless we could see in the nature  
of things, or in *revelation*, what will evi-  
dently justify such an action. Now it is  
certain that no one can be placed in cir-  
cumstances of distress, that, by the vicis-  
situde of things, we may not conceive  
some hopes of an alteration. And there  
is no affliction, which may not be of ser-  
vice, by an example of courage and firm-  
ness of mind, and of an intire resignation  
to

SERM. to the divine will. And, if we should  
 XVIII. suppose that the weight and pressure of evil  
 is great, and hardly to be borne; cannot you see (when *Philosophers* could triumph under the greatest distresses and afflictions; even by false, *Stoical* principles) that you are weak, and even cowardly; with better principles to support you? What! not bear a few evils? when the frame is so brittle; and the pain cannot be long; and you have immortality in prospect? I cannot think any will be guilty of this vice of *self-murder*; but one that has indulged himself in pursuits that are criminal and vicious. And that it is, from this, that he is so very pressing to get out of the station, in which he is fixed.

It is certain that we are placed in this life, by our creator. From his providence, our distresses and afflictions arise. And, since he has placed us here, for the training us up in the practice of virtue; and particularly to gain a firmness of mind, and resignation to his will; it must appear a very right thing for us not to be impatient, not to be too hasty in getting out of difficulties, which attend this state: especially,  
 if

if we think that there will be a greater reward. It appears to be the reason why providence suffers the virtuous to be often in distress; and many times under greater trials than attend those that are vicious; that he might, by these difficult duties, train them up to a better world; and teach men that there must be another life. For, can we imagine that great Being will not distinguish those that govern their actions by his rule? Surely; it is plainly his will and pleasure that the virtuous should be happy. And, if it is not so here, it must infer another state, in which the virtuous will finally triumph.

I have said enough to prove that preserving life is a duty; and the contrary, a vice. I have also shewn you from whence *self-murder* springs; and how unjust it is to step out of life, without the call of the governor of all.

I would take notice of another thing, which men, as a point of honor, assert, *viz.*  
 “ that they may fight a duel, and give in-  
 “ to sudden passion; without weighing the  
 “ value of life; or for what ends they were  
 “ sent into this world.”

They

SERM.  
XVIII.  
~

SERM. They are weak, impotent men; have  
 XVIII. no rein, no government, of their passions;  
 and then their honor will induce them to  
 risque their own lives, and to hazard the  
 lives of others: and for no other design  
 than to gratifie an headstrong, rash passion.  
 Such persons would do well to consider  
 who gave them their life; and the design  
 of him that imparted it.

If they would show courage in fighting  
 for their country; and in defending others  
 that are distressed; *that* would be virtuous  
 and noble. But to think that their own  
 lives, or the lives of others, are to be sub-  
 ject to their passions, is the wrongest of  
 any thing imaginable.

3. It is the duty of every man, agree-  
 ably to his circumstances, to indeavor,  
 by proper care and pains, to cultivate and  
 improve his understanding, which is the  
 highest gift of God to him.

It is certain that we cannot demonstrate  
 what degree of application is proper; but  
 that some degree of industry is due to the  
 improvement of the mind, must appear to  
 be highly fit and reasonable.

Every



Every one's circumstances are not alike. SERM.  
 And therefore some, who have families XVIII.  
 to maintain, and who are put to great  
 difficulties to support them, cannot be  
 under the same obligation as others, in  
 larger circumstances; who have it in their  
 power to command greater portions of time.  
 I know very well, this will be ridiculed  
 by some. "What! are the lowest orders  
 " of mankind to improve their under-  
 " standings? The consequence will then  
 " be, they will neglect their post; and  
 " disregard the lower offices of life."

When I speak of the improvement of  
 the understanding, I design no more than  
 that they should know the foundation of  
 all duties, which refer to *themselves*, to  
*others*, and to God. To have such sen-  
 timents of *Deity*, as are free from supersti-  
 tious dread; that shall influence them to  
 perform all the moral duties with a taste of  
 pleasure and delight; — such a knowledge  
 is not so difficult to attain. And it is of  
 necessity, and what in reason every one  
 must pursue. Are you pleased with the  
 consequences of neglecting such an im-  
 provement; when you have servants, that

D d

neither

SERM. neither practise their duty, nor know what  
 XVIII. they ought to practise? And will not this  
 lead you to own that this is highly unfit  
 in your own conduct?

Give me leave to remark, from the whole, how wise the rule of the antients was, when they recommended to others *Know thyself*; and represented that the highest instance of true knowlege is *the knowlege of ourselves*.

If we know our own make, we shall easily attain a clear and extensive view of the moral obligations that refer to *ourselves*. And, upon this knowlege of ourselves, are founded the duties, which we owe to others.

The duty of *Sobriety* is of much greater compass and extent than men are, generally, aware of. And, considering the state of things and the prevailing ignorance and inattention of mankind, it is no surprize to me that there should be so many desirous of runing into superstition, rather than the practice of *true religion*; i. e. real piety and extensive virtue.

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